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December 2007

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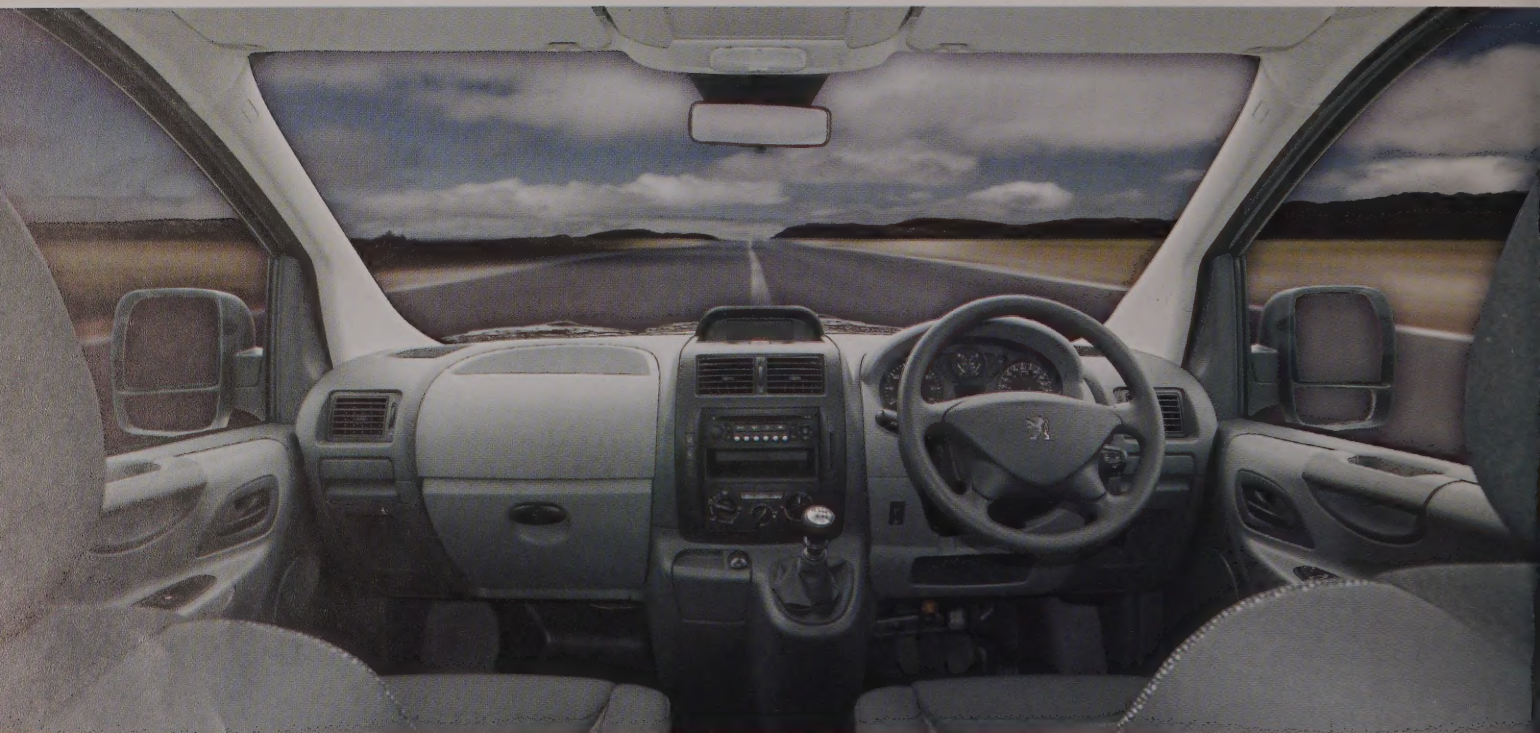
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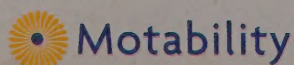


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editorial

Rights not charity

The annual Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal happened over the past few weeks with all sorts of people from TV newsreaders to your average Gill or Joe in the street sporting the familiar red emblem. Some people wear the poppy as a genuine mark of remembrance. Others may do so as part of the same reflex action as dropping a coin into a tin.

For other people, the appeal triggers a set of more complex responses to do with the rights and wrongs of remembering those who have died fighting for their country or the ins and outs of commemorating acts of war. But publicity surrounding this year's appeal has raised a whole other set of questions for me as a disabled person.

Putting aside my own views and feelings on the poppy, what surrounds it and what it signifies, it's the appeal element which has concerned me. This year, the legion has used its publicity material to push its role as a service provider alongside the remembrance message. One poster features Allen Parton, a wheelchair-user

who, since being injured in the Gulf War of 1991, has benefited from the Legion's support. Alan is shown being pushed along by a six-foot figure made out of poppies. Presented in this way, he cannot but be seen as a recipient of

“This year's appeal has raised a whole other set of questions”

charity reliant for something as fundamental as movement through life on the poppy. Alan says that while he was in hospital recovering from his injuries, his wife and young family were being evicted from their naval married quarters and it was the legion which got them re-housed. One of the compensations, he says, of being a wheelchair-user is knowing that he got there defending people's right to freedom of speech.

I would demand the right to say that an image of a disabled person as a passive object of charity sets back the call for equal rights, equal choices and equal lives more than a little.

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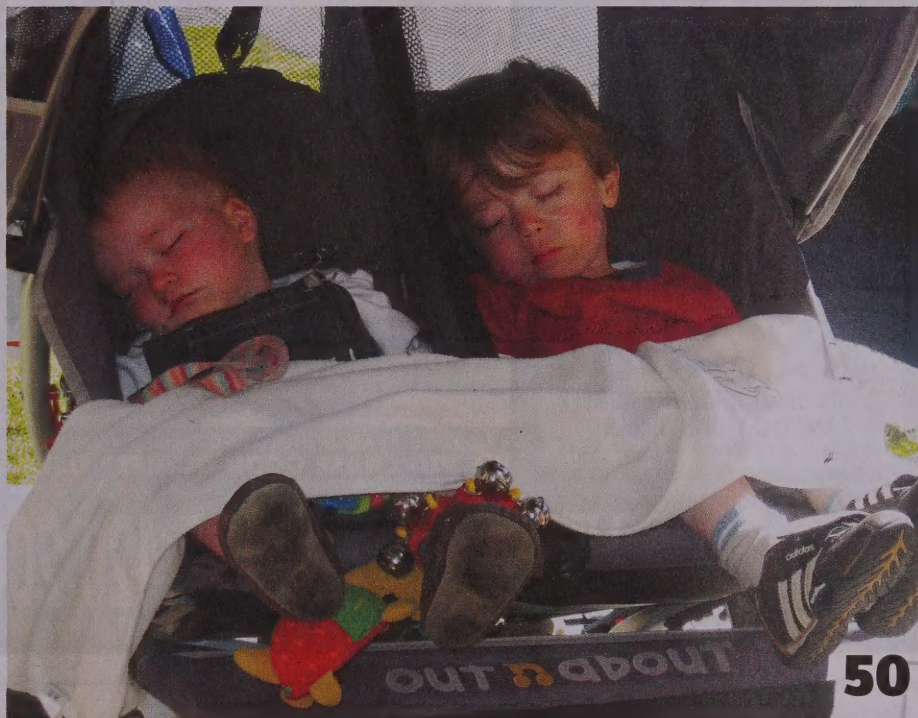
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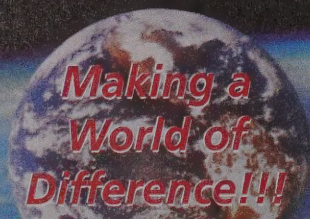
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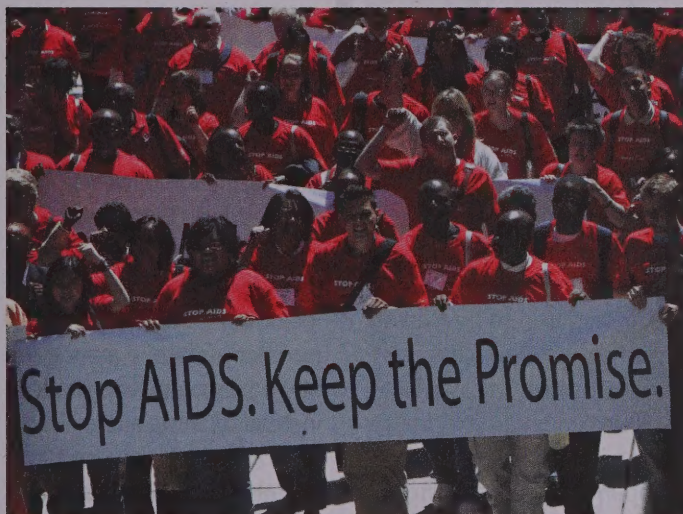
Partner



Vaneo

newsview

The long journey



As World AIDS Day approaches, the chief executive of the National AIDS Trust talks to **Katharine Quarmby** about removing the stigma and discrimination faced by those living with HIV

For a chief executive of a charity that is pivotal in the British efforts supporting the 20th World AIDS Day on 1 December, Deborah Jack (pictured, above right) is tremendously cheery. The National AIDS Trust (NAT), which was set up in 1988, is an influential national presence, partly down to the hard work of Ms Jack, who has run the charity for the past four years.

She has presided over a period in which the outcomes of those living with HIV have improved beyond belief. In 1994, deaths from HIV peaked at 1,500 a year in the UK. Ten years later, they had fallen

to 400. Now, as long as people with HIV have access to medication, life expectancy should be long.

But those living with HIV – around 70,000 in the UK – still face considerable stigma and discrimination. They are still more likely to be unemployed than those with similar qualifications.

Many people still feel isolated. Some experience hate crime, although figures are hard to come by because the police are still using the old definition of disability, which excludes those with HIV. And the two main groups who live with HIV in the UK, black Africans and gay men, have

to deal with sexuality and/or race discrimination, as well as their condition.

These are some of the reasons why Ms Jack and her enthusiastic team lobbied for those with HIV to be protected from the point of diagnosis by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) two years ago.

“We lobbied hard for that change on the basis of the social model of disability,” she says. “Many people with HIV do not have an obvious physical impairment, but they are discriminated against because of how other people see their disability.”

The other change that has helped those with HIV, she says, is their inclusion under the disability equality duty. “It helped us to educate employers about their obligations to those with HIV.”

“Often people with HIV do not see themselves as disabled and even resent the label”

The organisation has also worked with small businesses to educate them about making reasonable adjustments for those living with HIV – access to a fridge for medication, for instance.

Small businesses responded by saying that HIV was just one condition,



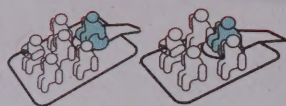
so the NAT wrote a leaflet that covered other hidden impairments – its first foray into the issues faced by the wider disability movement.

But Ms Jack adds: “Often people with HIV do not see themselves as disabled and even resent the label. We tell them that the DDA gives them legal protection, but we also acknowledge that many people with HIV face multiple discrimination.

“The current law puts people in boxes. We hope that a new Single Equality Act will change that.”

The aim of this year’s World AIDS Day is to “get people talking” about HIV. The campaign’s website (www.worldaidsday.org) features people talking openly about living with the condition. This attempt to dispel many of the myths around HIV is because, Ms Jack says, “HIV differs from many other disabilities in that it is seen as something shameful. HIV has blame attached to it – there is this whole concept of good AIDS and bad AIDS that we are trying to combat through communication.”

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breakingnews

Remploy cuts back closure plans

Remploy, the provider of employment services to disabled people, has bowed to pressure from trades unions and halved the number of factories it is recommending to be closed.

Remploy announced plans earlier this year to close 32 factories and merge 11 more out of a total of 83. Now the company has recommended to the Department for Work and Pensions that just 17 will close, with another 11 merging.

Bob Warner, chief executive of Remploy, said: "The plan which we have submitted to the secretary of state meets the goals set by the government for us to support many more disabled people into jobs in mainstream employment, avoid compulsory redundancy of employees and remains within the £555m funding limit."

But the Remploy Consortium of Trades Unions dubbed the new proposals "rubbish". Paul Kenny, general secretary of the GMB union, said: "This is the management that said 43 factories had to go; now they say it is 28. They know they are jumping the gun with these proposals."

As *Disability Now* went to press, the consortium unveiled its plan to secure a future for all 83 factories.

The plan includes cutting costs by £20 million, including reducing the number of middle managers, having a single head office instead of three and improving working practices.

It also says Remploy can secure an extra £50 million of public orders a year.

Mr Kenny said: "There is massive scope to trim costs by rationalisation, better methods of procurement and improved working practices."

The unions will continue with their plans for further demonstrations. They were also due to hold a 24-hour vigil at the House of Commons. A lobby of parliament will take place in late November.

Simone Aspis, representing the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (UKDPC), said it wanted to discuss "what Remploy was doing to assist disabled people to move into a wide range of jobs in mainstream employment".

Both Remploy and the consortium have submitted their separate proposals to

work and pensions secretary, Peter Hain. Mr Hain said that “although full agreement was not reached between the company and the trade unions, there has been real dialogue and progress on both sides”.

He added that there was “common ground” on “the need for fewer factory closures”.

Mark Harper, the shadow disability minister, said: “The reality is that these closure proposals have always had to be approved by ministers. Peter Hain tried to spin his way out of a difficult Labour conference in September and raised false expectations.”



Spud the slug and friends challenge creature discomforts

Charity Leonard Cheshire Disability has teamed up with Wallace and Gromit creators Aardman Animations to create a disability awareness advertising campaign. The campaign, called Creature Discomforts, features characters including Spud the slug (*pictured*) who uses an electric wheelchair. The animations are voiced by real-life disabled people.

Equality 2025 holds first public meeting

Disabled people must pressurise the government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, a conference heard on 12 November.

The call came at the first public meeting of Equality 2025 (E2025), a group of disabled people who were appointed by the government to advise on how to deliver recommendations in its report, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*.

Delegates gathered in

Birmingham to give their views and suggestions on four key issues:

independent living and user-led organisations, disability hate crime, the UN Convention, and transition into adulthood for disabled people.

During group discussions, delegates said they were concerned about the decline of user-led organisations and the lack of support and low expectations of young disabled people.

E2025 member Miro

Griffiths told the conference that disabled people are “thrown over the fence” of childhood into adulthood.

The conference also heard that disabled people would like more training and awareness within the police force and judicial system in order to combat hate crime.

Delegates called for a clear-cut definition of disability hate crime as well as a discussion about the best way to approach perpetrators. Several delegates called for “restorative” instead of

“punitive” justice, suggesting that mandatory community service and mediation could be a way to educate people and challenge the stereotypes that lead to hate crime. But E2025 member Clenton Farquharson told *Disability Now* that he wasn’t sure that disabled victims would automatically endorse “restorative justice”.

Mr Farquharson went on to endorse the widespread view that centres for independent living are in trouble and said that they needed mandatory funding.

breakingnews

Lukewarm welcome for Queen's Speech

Disability organisations have cautiously welcomed measures in Gordon Brown's first Queen's Speech. The government's programme for the next year will include a criminal justice and immigration bill with a new offence of inciting hatred against disabled, gay, lesbian and transgender people. It has delayed plans for a single equalities bill.

The government will also introduce a "stronger" health and social care

regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with tougher powers.

The CQC will merge the existing Commission for Social Care Inspection, Healthcare Commission and Mental Health Act Commission.

Neil Coyle, head of policy for the National Centre for Independent Living, said he hoped that proposed hate crime laws and the Care Quality Commission would give specific attention to crimes being committed

against disabled people in the healthcare system.

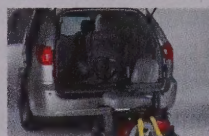
Mr Coyle added that he was happy that the Queen's Speech omitted bills on single equality legislation and adult social care reform.

He said: "The initial fear was that the government would rush through its own views [on these issues] without consulting disabled people."

Meanwhile, pan-disability group RADAR has called on the government to consider disabled people

more closely in every piece of legislation proposed in the Queen's Speech.

RADAR chief executive Liz Sayce said: "The government will only be able to achieve its admirable targets...by taking into account the needs of the 11 million disabled people in the UK. All policy-making, regardless of whether its central concern is disabled people, needs to consider the impact it will have on disabled people."

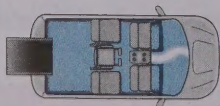


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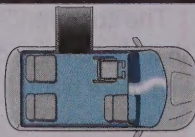
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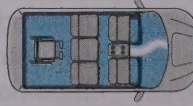
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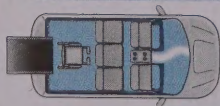
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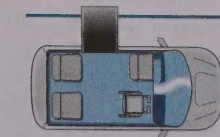
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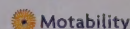


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newsround-up

New unit aims to wipe out child poverty

Disability campaigners welcomed a new government unit aimed at eradicating child poverty in the UK, but warned that plans must particularly consider families with disabled children.

The new Child Poverty Unit will oversee government plans to halve child poverty by 2010 and abolish it completely by 2020, bringing together experts from the Departments for Work and Pensions and for Children, Schools and Families.

Linda Studds, policy manager for Family Fund, which provides grants to

low-income families with disabled children, said: "What that unit really needs to do now is to look at the specific needs of families with disabled children. Providing it does this, we really welcome it. The government is moving in the right direction."

MPs call for new SEN system

MPs repeated demands for a reform of the system for assessing and funding special educational needs (SEN) support.

At present, local councils are responsible for assessing

and funding provision, but the education and skills committee said the responsibilities for assessing and funding should be undertaken by separate bodies.

The government has already rejected similar calls from the committee because it said any separation would lead to more bureaucracy.

Richard Rieser, director of Disability Equality in Education, dismissed the committee's demands and said the current system could work.

Schools minister Andrew Adonis said the government would be "carefully considering" the ideas put forward by the committee, and will research ideas for increasing parents' trust in the SEN system.

'No need' for new abortion law

MPs concluded that the abortion laws do not need to be reformed and that a definition of "serious handicap", which permits women to seek termination up to term, does not need clarification.

The science and technology select committee said it would not be feasible to compile "an exhaustive list of abnormalities" to guide those deciding if a late termination was permissible.

But it said "further guidance on what 'serious handicap' means would be helpful", and called for better data collection.

Abortion is set to be debated when the human tissue and embryos bill comes before the Commons in the next parliamentary session.



Disabled ex-serviceman fronts 2007 Poppy Appeal

An image of a disabled ex-serviceman was seen on posters around the country. Allen Parton, from Hampshire, featured in hundreds of posters in a campaign to persuade people to work as volunteer poppy-sellers for this year's Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. Formerly in the Navy, Mr Parton was injured in the 1991 Gulf War. By taking part in the campaign, he said he was giving something back to the Royal British Legion.

Man jailed for dying woman outrage

A man who urinated on a disabled woman as she lay dying was sent to prison for three years.

Anthony Anderson, 27, from Raby Road, Hartlepool, had pleaded guilty to outraging public decency.

Christine Lakinski had collapsed at her front door in Hartlepool. Anderson carried out a series of humiliating acts against Miss Lakinski

while his friend filmed the events on his mobile phone. A crowd stood and watched.

A post-mortem later confirmed that Miss Lakinski died of natural causes.

Judge Peter Fox, sentencing Anderson at Teesside Crown Court, said: "You violated this woman in an incredible way and the shocking nature of your acts over a prolonged period of time must mean that a prison sentence of greater length is appropriate in this case."

Delay over single equalities bill

Disability organisations called on the government to publish a draft single equality bill, following news that proposed legislation had been pulled from last month's Queen's Speech.

The calls came after negative reactions to the government's green paper, published in June, which critics said weakens the disability equality duty on public bodies.

A government spokeswoman said the bill was likely to be included in the next Queen's Speech, in November 2008.

She said the government hopes to publish draft clauses of the bill before then and that it would publish a response to the green paper consultation around the turn of the year.

Fire death mum and daughter 'bullied'

Police in Leicestershire confirmed that a mother and her disabled daughter, who died in a car fire in Leicestershire, had faced a sustained campaign of intimidation and bullying from a gang of youths.

The police said Fiona Pilkington, mother of 18-year-old Francesca, had reported "several incidents of anti-social behaviour" to the force.

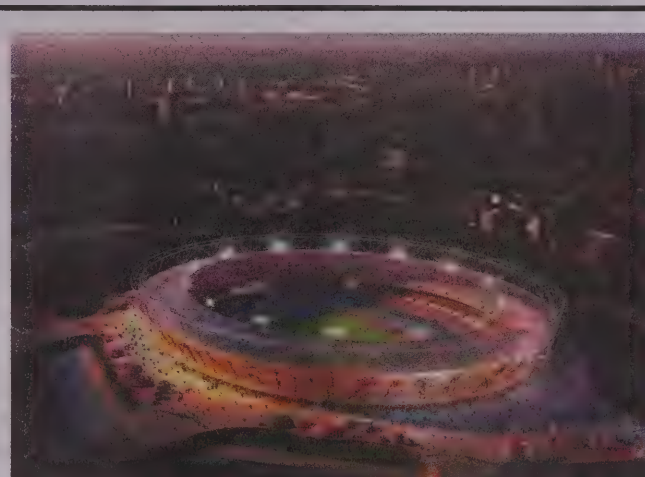
Police believe Miss Pilkington killed herself and her daughter. They are not seeking anyone else in connection with their deaths.

Friends and neighbours said that Francesca, who had learning difficulties, was often teased because of her impairment. They claimed youths pelted their home with eggs and stones.

Cash boost for user-led groups

The government announced a cash boost to support user-led organisations (ULOs) of disabled people.

About 10 grants will be handed out this year from a new £850,000 fund. The grants will be given to existing ULOs, which provide services such as



Artist's impression of the Olympic Stadium

Blue badge spaces at London 2012

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have been declared car-free destinations, with all spectators having to travel by foot, public transport, or bicycle – except for some disabled people with blue badges.

In March, *Disability Now* reported how plans for the Olympic Park had placed blue badge parking up to 250 metres away from the entrance to the park, with a "games mobility service"

in operation alongside rest stops and a "range of accessible seating".

The Olympic Delivery Authority now says there will be at least 550 blue badge parking spaces, although plans have not yet been finalised. There will also be accessible tube, bus and rail travel, and direct coach services.

Inside the Olympic Park, a mobility service will include a manual wheelchair and electric scooter loan scheme, and an internal electric vehicle escort system.

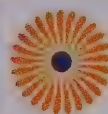
advocacy, housing advice, employment training and direct payments assistance.

The government wants each local authority area with social services responsibilities to have its own ULO, modelled on existing centres for

independent living (CIL).

But ULOs have been losing out to larger charities and organisations when bidding for contracts to provide services.

More news at
www.disabilitynow.org.uk



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campaigns

Shock cases add to hate file

Disability Now is liaising with police and disability rights groups over our hate crime campaign as two more cases come to light, says **Katharine Quarmby**

Two cases have shocked Britain this month – both relating to disabled people (see News round-up for more details).

Police in Leicestershire believe that a mother killed herself and her disabled daughter in October – after a sustained campaign of intimidation by local youths.

A police spokesman said that Fiona Pilkington, mother of Francesca Hardwick, who had learning difficulties, had reported “several incidents of anti-social behaviour”. He added: “As a force, we are asking questions of ourselves by reviewing the incidents Fiona reported to us.”

In another case, Anthony Anderson, who urinated on Christine Lakinski as she lay dying outside her home in July, has been sent to prison for three years.

A spokesman for the Crown Prosecution Service said that prosecutors had “no evidence that the defendant had verbally abused the victim” or shown that he knew that she was disabled to make it an “aggravated sentence”, although Anderson lived in the same street as Miss Lakinski.

However, there are signs of



Tragic deaths: Francesca Hardwick (left) and Fiona Pilkington

hope. Senior officers in the Metropolitan Police seem committed to improving how hate crimes are investigated.

“There is a willingness to deal with hate crime, but no strategy at all”

Deputy assistant commissioner Alfred Hitchcock says that from next year the Met will simplify the way in which impairments are categorised. This should help to ensure that hate crimes will be “appropriately flagged”.

The disability independent advisory group to the Met (DIAG) has pressed hard for change, partly because of the case of Albert Adams, a disabled man who was

murdered in Greenwich by a “friend”, Jennifer Henry, in March 2005. Disability groups claim that the case was poorly investigated.

Anne Novis, co-chair of DIAG, says that the fact that Mr Adams had been complaining that his money was being stolen regularly was never investigated. Following an internal Met inquiry, it emerged that despite neighbours reporting a violent dispute, police failed initially to treat the crime as a hate crime. Eventually it was classified as domestic violence and Ms Henry was convicted of murder. But it was never

treated as a hate crime – which would have lengthened the tariff.

Anne Novis and Ruth Bashall, her co-chair of DIAG, are pressing for a review of all murders of disabled people in the capital to see whether they were hate crimes.

Ruth Bashall says: “It’s taken us three years to get this far on the flagging of crimes. There is a willingness to deal with hate crime, but no strategy at all.”

The government, in the latest Queen’s Speech, has announced that inciting hatred against disabled people will become a separate crime. This may prove useful in isolated cases, but only if police officers are trained to use the law – which has not been the case with the sentencing provision so far.

As for the *Disability Now* campaign, we are asking victims and their families about their experiences. We are also discussing the campaign with the police, charities, disability rights groups and politicians.

Next month: how local groups have improved the way that disability hate crime is investigated.

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE/PA WIRE

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mediawatch

Trouble at Mills



© HEATHER MILLS

Clearly, the glare of publicity and attention she received from being on our relaunch cover just wasn't enough for Heather Mills. No sooner had *Disability Now* hit the newsstands, than she hit the Street of Shame.

It sure looks as though she's way better at turning

herself into a target than anyone else is at making her one, even when she's not intending to, which is probably almost all of the time. In our piece, for example, she told us: "I have 22 close friends."

Hmm, just too many to cook dinner for, but not

enough to make a party. *Heat* magazine picked that one up and were doubtless mighty proud. But woah there! If they thought 22 friends was weird, they should have hung on.

She was the new Kate McCann, the new Diana. And all this before she revealed that Macca is more attached to his wallet than she is to her 22 close friends, that her own and her daughter's lives have been threatened, and that Sir P and daughter Stella "chortled" over Lady H's prosthetic leg. If so then we curse them for it, but, it has to be said, you have to work pretty hard as a disabled person to alienate yourself from your own community. Sadly, Lady M-M appears to have managed it.

CAPTURED

On the web

Found on a far-right website: "Why do disabled people need special parking? They all have wheelchairs."

A muddled muggle

During a breakfast telly interview J K Rowling referred to "mentally handicapped children". Do try to keep up, J K.

Coming up

A trail on BBC Radio Five Live told us that the *Five Live Report* – which we hear has been decommissioned – will soon feature disability hate crime. Good to see that where *Disability Now* leads, Five Live follows. What next, more disability sport?

Robert is FT to burst

Was that a collective gasp of astonishment which went round the *Disability Now* operations hub? It was. The FT, of all papers, and its news editor, of all people, coming on like Colonel Huff-Puffington about the notion of disability hate crime. We were pleased to discover that Robert Shrimley himself does not hate what he termed "the disabled" – though he clearly doesn't know that many of us hate that term – but he did pour

FINANCIAL TIMES

scorn on the idea that there are people who vent their hate against disabled people by, among other things, appropriating all their money, locking them in garden sheds and, as happened in the most recent case in Hartlepool, pissing on a disabled woman for the benefit of bystanders and their mobile phones. Mr Shrimley clearly needs to get out more. Perhaps a long weekend in Hartlepool?



Andy's personal Hell

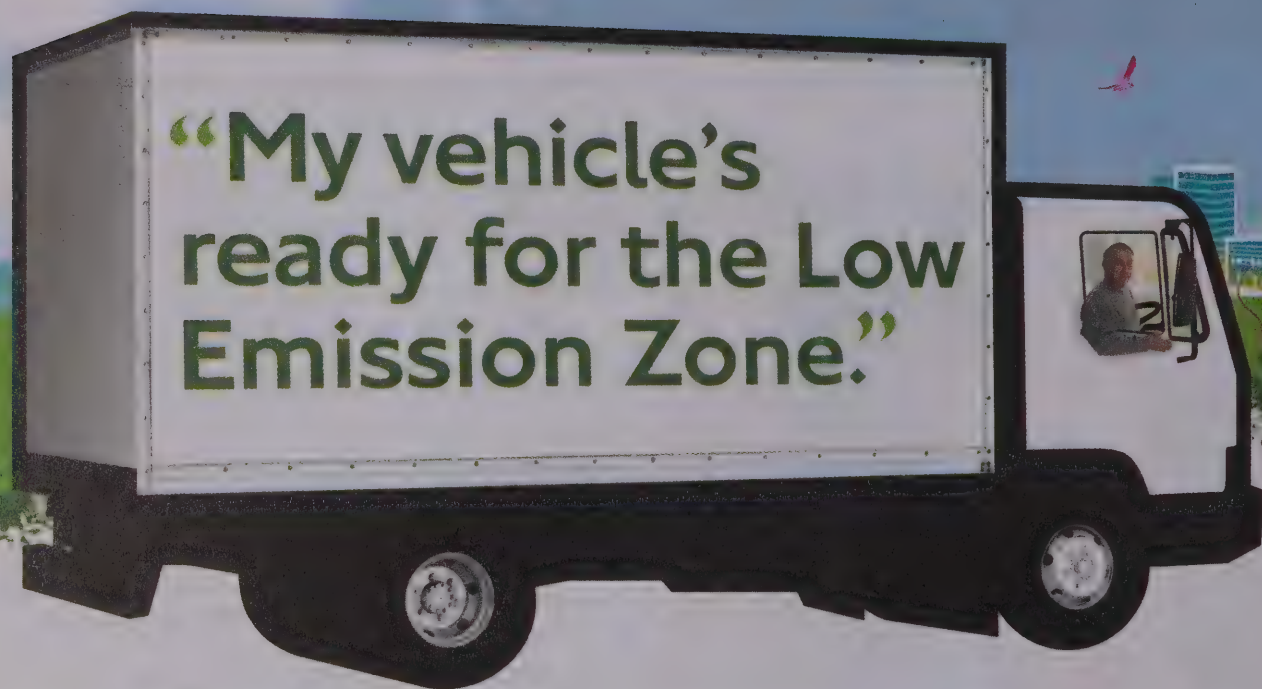
OK, when did you last encounter a TV or radio show written by and starring the same disabled person? If you're in the know, you'll be jiggling up and down with your hand up saying: "Me sir! Me sir!" And gagging to tell

me you were tuned into the latest series of *Old Harry's Game*, which has just ended on Radio 4. The shows, also starring Annette Crosby, the former Mrs Meldrew, are predicated on the idea of the actual existence of the biblical hell. Hamilton as Satan clops about on coconut-shell hooves dispensing torment to everyone from Adam and Eve to a pitful of Popes. Andy has always seemed rather shy about his impairment, but we are on his case, in the nicest possible way.

Low
emission



Cleaner air for Greater London



Is your vehicle?

The Low Emission Zone (LEZ) is being introduced from 4 February 2008 to help improve air quality in Greater London. There will be a phased launch, starting with the heaviest of the most polluting diesel-engined lorries (over 12 tonnes) which will need to meet Euro III emissions standards for particulate matter (PM). Lighter lorries between 3.5 and 12 tonnes will need to meet this standard from 7 July 2008 and larger vans between 1.205 tonnes (unladen weight) and 3.5 tonnes must meet this standard from 4 October 2010. All lorries over 3.5 tonnes must meet Euro IV for PM by January 2012.

You will need to check that your vehicle meets the specified emissions standards to drive within the Greater London Low Emission Zone without paying the high daily charge. Owners of GB-licensed vehicles can use the vehicle compliance checker at tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon or call 0845 607 0009 to see if they are affected and what action they may have to take.

Some vehicles with Euro II engines and a very small number of vehicles with Euro I engines may also meet the required LEZ emissions standards. The list of eligible engines is available on our website or call us for information and next steps.

If your vehicle doesn't meet the LEZ emissions standards, there are several options:

- Avoid travelling in the zone.
- Modify your vehicle by fitting approved pollution abatement equipment.
- Upgrade to a newer vehicle.
- Pay the daily charge of £200 (vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, affected from 2008) or £100 (vehicles under 3.5 tonnes, affected from October 2010).

All non-GB licensed vehicles (inc. Northern Ireland) which meet the emissions standards need to be registered for the LEZ with Transport for London to be driven within the zone without incurring high daily charges. Registration forms are available online or call (+44) 20 7310 8998 from overseas.

Visit tfl.gov.uk/lezlondon or call 0845 607 0009 for more information.

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politics

REX FEATURES



Queen Babs speaks to the nation

Following a Queen's Speech somewhat lacking in disability savvy, our own royal personage **Barbara Lisicki** delivers a radical alternative

My first major act in the alternative Queen's Speech is to make the entire Cabinet and then the rest of the Labour government undertake disability equality training to bring them up to speed with our issues. Included in the compulsory session will be disabled and older people speaking on the subjects of being forced to live in institutions because of lack of accessible, affordable housing and community care support; how government bureaucracy

I would triple the Arts Council budget and allocate it all to disability arts and cultural diversity

perpetuates the poverty trap for millions of disabled people; disabled parents and their children describing the iniquity and immorality of forcing those children to become "carers" and asking why the state allows it to happen; and exposing why "care" and support for disabled people is one of the lowest paid,

lowest status jobs that it's possible to do.

The social model of disability will be explained and made available in easy-read and Braille versions and would, by law, form the basis of any future policy. We'll get the heavyweights in on this one – Mike Oliver, Colin Barnes, oneself, and Lorraine Gradwell – while Dame Jane Campbell could oversee proceedings in her ermine robes.

Once the government has absorbed the facts, they will be made to sit a test on the Disability Discrimination Act.

Let's take these three million homes that are to be built in the next decade and give them the universal designation of Lifetime Homes, and teach all those young people staying on in education skills like plumbing, bricklaying and electrics to speed up the whole process.

I will put British Sign Language on the core curriculum in schools. I believe this will signal a new enthusiasm for languages and make future generations better communicators.

I am placing Independent Living at the heart of a new



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Milton Keynes: disabled artists could make driving here fun

legislative programme and making jumping through hoops unlawful. Except for circus performers.

And to promote generosity of spirit, I would triple the Arts Council budget and allocate it all to disability arts and cultural diversity.

Huge grants would go to that most joyous of musical theatre groups, Heart 'n Soul, to create job opportunities for people with learning difficulties, so that they will be given real alternatives to packing screws into plastic bags or shelf-stacking.

And public art would be

designed by disabled artists. Alison Lapper will be commissioned to make a giant marble sculpture of a naked Marc Quinn. I look forward to my plan being executed on the roundabouts of Milton Keynes. Then getting lost would be so much more entertaining.

How to pay for all this? Pull all the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan. Scrap Trident. Stop building nuclear power stations. Factor in millions of people who won't become disabled if all this happened. That'll do for starters.

→ Have your say

- write to us 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

disabilityrights

Deafblind children 'need more support'

Nearly 90 per cent of deafblind young people do not receive specialist support to participate in out-of-school leisure activities, according to a national deafblind charity.

Local authorities are required to provide specialist assessments, one-to-one support, appropriate information and services designed to meet the needs of deafblind children outside school.

But the Sense report* says local authorities often fail to provide support, and deafblind young people must rely instead on their families to participate in activities like swimming, horse-riding and bowling.

Lucy Drescher, campaigns officer at Sense, said that more than 4,000 deafblind children and young people in the UK are legally entitled to support, and 83 per cent of families surveyed were under "significant pressure", due to a lack of specialist support.

The mother of one deafblind child said: "When I approached my local social services for a section seven deafblind assessment to address my child's needs, they said they hadn't even heard of it.

"Even when I pointed out it is mandatory, they were still very resistant. It was a constant fight just to get what we were entitled to."

Schools minister Andrew



Pictured at Westminster are (left to right): John Hayes MP, Nathaniel Roberts, who is deafblind, and his mother Elaine, Simon Howard and his daughter Jessica, who is deafblind, Sense's Lucy Drescher and Tim Loughton MP

Adonis said: "We are committed to improving the life chances of disabled young people, including those affected by deafblindness.

"I know that my colleagues at the Department of Health are working closely with

Sense to revise the guidance for local authorities setting out the services they should provide for deafblind children."

* Breaking Out; for copies, visit www.sense.org.uk or ring Jim Lewis on 020 7561 3413

Rights 'under threat'

Elizabeth Choppin

Tightening eligibility criteria for services for disabled people could have long-term negative impacts on their human rights, a committee of MPs has heard.

Rob Greig, national director for learning disabilities and co-chair of the National Task Force for Learning Disability, was giving evidence to the joint

parliamentary committee on human rights as part of its ongoing inquiry into the human rights of adults with learning disabilities.

Mr Greig said: "I appreciate the financial difficulties that local authorities are under, but it seems to me that a decision by an authority only to provide services to people who are deemed critical is going to have long-term financial impacts on [those people], let alone the

impacts on the quality of life of the people themselves."

People with learning difficulties and their families should be made aware of their rights "so they know what they can demand back out of services", said Greig.

A human rights-based approach has led to some positive changes, he said.

He said the government has an important role in providing support frameworks, but the bulk of

responsibility for securing change should fall on local services.

He said changes should include improved frameworks for health and social care, strengthened learning disability partnership boards across the country, and a robust delivery of the disability equality duty in employment, housing and healthcare.

The committee will publish a report in early 2008.



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(NTPL/Ian Shaw)

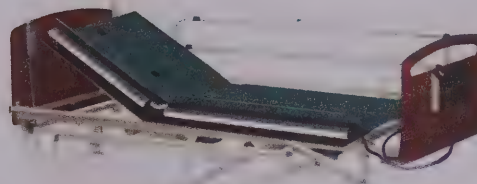
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America's hate crime odyssey

Awareness of hate crimes against disabled people in the United States is increasing, but more still needs to be done, says **Dr Mark Sherry**

A disability hate crime is a crime in which the perpetrators specifically target a person, in whole or in part, because they are disabled. Internationally, there has been a huge increase in awareness over the last few years, and many legislatures are introducing hate crime laws.

One of the most important examples of this trend has been the introduction of hate crime legislation in the United States. The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 was passed in the Senate on 27 September, although President George Bush has



threatened to veto the bill.

This law extends hate crime legislation to include disability hate crimes, as well as hate crimes based on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Many disability groups regard the introduction of hate crime legislation as an important step in protecting the rights of disabled people, alongside other changes such as disability awareness and anti-stigma campaigns.

In the US, there have been many highly publicised disability hate crimes in recent years. In one case, in February 2007, Ronald Bray, from California, was sentenced to 32 months in prison because he spat upon a man in a wheelchair who was outside a 7-Eleven store, pushed the man's wheelchair into a lightpost, racially vilified the victim and raised his arm in a Nazi salute.

Another case in Minneapolis in October 2006 saw a double-amputee wheelchair-user repeatedly beaten with a tyre iron.

Many disability hate crimes involve multiple forms of prejudice – the crime

committed by Bray demonstrated that they may also involve racist prejudice, but the crime against another disabled person (this time in New Mexico) demonstrates that sexual orientation, as well as disability, can lead to victimisation.

In September 2006, a transgender disabled man who has been given the pseudonym "Elliot" was allegedly raped in a barbershop. The barber called Elliot a "retard", "bitch" and "faggot", while he allegedly held a razor to his throat.

Most disability hate crimes do not involve murder or violent crime. Typically, they involve some degree of harassment. For instance, in September 2006, two juveniles aged 12 and 14 in Shirley, Suffolk (in the US), spray-painted swastikas on the house of a neighbour, who had multiple sclerosis. They were charged with first-degree aggravated assault as a hate crime.

Another common form of disability hate crime involves theft. Such was the case with Katholeen Todder, of Madison, Wisconsin, who was charged with stealing more than \$25,000 of antiques from a dying disabled woman.

More and more countries are recognizing that harassment, prejudice, violence and intimidation against disabled people is a

serious problem which needs to be immediately addressed. Part of that project must involve getting an accurate estimation of the size of the problem.

The author's research at the University of California at Berkeley indicated that there were serious problems with under-reporting of disability hate crimes. Part of this problem is a misunderstanding of what a "hate crime" is. For instance, the author interviewed one young woman who used a prosthetic leg. Her house had been burgled twice, and the prosthetic leg was the only thing taken on both occasions. She had reported it to the police, who had some suspects, but the incident was regarded as a "prank" more than a hate crime. And yet the characteristics of this crime – repeatedly targeting the woman's disability, clearly fits the definition of a disability hate crime. Neither the victim nor the police seemed to understand this – suggesting that there is still a great deal of work to be done in raising awareness of the problem.

• **Dr Mark Sherry is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Toledo in Ohio. He is an Australian, currently living in the US, and is writing a book on disability hate crimes. He is a brain injury survivor**

Thalidomide drama beats ban call

Despite efforts by the pharmaceutical industry to ban it, a controversial television drama about the drug thalidomide was finally shown on German television last month.

The two-part drama, *A Single Pill*, tells the story of a fictional lawyer whose wife takes the drug and gives birth to a thalidomide-impaired daughter.

The lawyer gradually becomes convinced that the birth defects were caused by thalidomide. The second part of the drama re-enacts the legal battle for compensation faced by people with impairments caused by the drug.

The producers of the drama had faced a lengthy battle with Grunenthal, the German company which first manufactured the drug, and the real lawyer who led the compensation fight.

A German court allowed the programme to be aired but will now hear arguments over whether it is defamatory.

Millions don't get any schooling

A third of children worldwide who are excluded from education are disabled, according to a new report.

The report, Education's

Missing Millions, by the development agency World Vision, found that about 26 million disabled children of primary school age in developing countries are currently not at school.

Philippa Lei, a senior child rights policy adviser and editor of the report, said the international community was failing to ensure that disabled children are included in efforts to provide universal primary education to all children by 2015.

She added: "It is critical that inclusive education rather than segregated education is understood as the best solution for

disabled children and key to achieving universal primary education."

Police halt Greek access protest

Disabled campaigners were stopped by Greek police as they headed for the prime minister's office in central Athens.

Among the demands made by the protesters last month were better access to buildings, measures to prevent pavements being blocked by parked cars and motorcycles, more generous benefits and a heating allowance.

9 November 2007
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BULGARIA'S ABANDONED CHILDREN
BBC Two: Sunday 18 November 2007 10pm-11.30pm

Director Kate Blewett visits a children's care home in Bulgaria and investigates the conditions in which the children live.

BBC FOUR

DIRECTOR'S COMMENT
Kate Blewett writes about making this upsetting film

HAVE YOUR SAY
Share your thoughts on the programme

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Country profile on BBC News

Bulgaria timeline
A chronology of key events

Scandal care home will be closed

A Bulgarian care home for children with physical impairments and learning difficulties is to be shut down, following the screening of a BBC documentary about neglect and lack of care.

The BBC4 documentary, *Bulgaria's Abandoned*

Children, sparked fierce debate in the country, although it has not yet been aired on Bulgarian television.

The decision to close the home in the village of Mogilino followed a visit by three Bulgarian government ministers.

The government has now drawn up a plan to move the children to new homes.

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Belle sounds off

Actress Lisa Hammond stars as Belle in the Lyric Hammersmith's family Christmas show *Beauty and the Beast*, showing 29 Nov – 5 Jan. In this role, as in others, she challenges conventions and stereotypical views.

Lisa has worked with some of the UK's most inventive theatre companies, including Improbable and Told by an Idiot. She also makes regular TV and film appearances, and is best known for her roles in Peter Kay's Channel 4 series *Max and Paddy's Road to Nowhere*, BBC2's drama *Every Time You Look at Me* and the BBC's 2005 adaptation of *Bleak House*.

What's the best thing about being disabled?

People picking things up when you drop them, and being able to get away with a lot.

What makes you angry?

People walking aimlessly down the street, not knowing where they're going. And people misunderstanding when I'm trying to explain something.

What's the funniest thing someone's ever said about your impairment?

Once in America we were staying in a modern town in Maine. We went to a state fair and as I was going in, one of these redneck women said to her kid, "Oh my God! There's a real-life little person. Go poke her."

How do you deal with people who barf on about your impairment? Have you any good put-downs?

I'm not savvy about that. I still get quite shocked when people say really stupid things. All the ones that I think of are never quite enough.

What's the one thing that could be invented that would make your life as a disabled person better?

An invention where you clap your hands and you've arrived somewhere. A transportation or morphing device.



MANUEL HARLAN

Appealing Belle: Lisa Hammond

What do you most like about the character you're currently playing?

Belle listens to people and she's very real. The other characters are all living in the world of fairytale and she's the real one. And she's not afraid to say what she thinks.

What do you not like?

That she's not a bitch.

Who's your favourite disabled person ever?

I hate them all! (laughs)

Do you have any special or hidden talents apart from acting?

I can put my fist in my mouth.

If you didn't have your impairment, which one would you like to have?

I'd like to be blind. It seems quite nice.

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our ten questions. They don't have to be actors. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment or beyond

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Just how accessible are this Christmas's bestselling toys?
Elizabeth Choppin investigates

Homer versus Baby Annabell in the battle of the toys

Leading toy store Hamley's, of Regent Street, London, kindly gave us seven of their top-selling toys for three disabled youngsters – Louise Doyle, 10, Elizabeth Yu, nine, and Jemma James, nine – to try out. This is what they thought of them

JEMMA

"I want to play with that one first," said Jemma, who has a hearing impairment, as soon as she saw the Bratz Movie Stars doll and its silver sequins gown. The doll is dressed as a movie star and comes with a real film camera so that children can take pictures of her in various glamour poses.

A Bratz doll collector, Jemma was a pro at putting on the fur coat and posing her for her close-up. She then aimed the camera and captured the moment from several different angles.

"I like this one," said Jemma as she brushed the doll's hair and rearranged its gown.

"I like him because I can play peek-a-boo with him"

The only way to distract her from Bratz was to present Barbie – The Princess Rosella Doll. But Jemma said she liked the Bratz doll better because it came with a larger hairbrush and because the clothes were brighter and more glittery.

Dancing Igglepiggie – a light blue soft toy that sings, dances and opens and closes its eyes when prompted – also received high marks from Jemma (above), who laid it down for sleep.

"It's the visual signs that let Jemma know what he's doing," said mum Kim as Igglepiggie closed its eyes and enclosed its arms in over its face.

"I like him because I can play peek-a-boo with him," said a delighted Jemma.

Unsurprisingly, Baby Annabell was also a huge hit. Jemma could hear and see the doll as she gave it a bottle and wiped its face with a tissue.

"It's loud enough that it enables her to pick up the sound," said Kim.

"I like it because it's noisy whereas a ➔



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newborn is probably not so noisy," said Jemma.

The Optimus Prime Voice Changer Helmet – a mask that goes over the head and transforms the wearer's voice into a robot-like sound – though loud enough for Jemma to hear, terrified her at first. She also didn't like that it was a "boys' toy". But once Kim showed her how it worked, Jemma laughed and gave it a go.

This cleared the way for the star of our visit – the Homersapien robot – a Homer Simpson robot that walks, talks, and moves each limb through a remote control with 20 green and red buttons. Jemma quickly worked out the remote control with a bit of instruction from her older brother, then took it away and moved the robot around the room, giggling all the while.

"Jemma does well with toys that have controls," said Kim. "Also this one and Igglepiggle work for her because they are visual and they are interactive."

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth showed her enthusiasm by diving right into the bag of toys and clapping her hands with glee.

Because Elizabeth is blind, she needs to feel the dimensions of each toy with her hands.

Igglepiggle, with its soft fur and fuzzy

blanket, was a good starting point.

After her mother, Yaitchi, helped her feel Igglepiggle, Elizabeth laid it down and put its blanket over it. She pushed the button on its foot,

🐷 The baby has gone to sleep. Ssssh 🐷

once she knew where it was, and smiled when Igglepiggle talked to her. She was happy to stay with Igglepiggle for a while.

Princess Rosella Barbie was also well received, and Elizabeth took to brushing her hair and making her dance and walk along the carpet. Although Barbie's tiny shoes kept falling off, Elizabeth didn't seem to mind putting them back on with Yaitchi's help.

But when Elizabeth located and pressed the "magical gem" on Barbie's

necklace and the doll began to sing, she tossed her aside and said, "I don't like that."

Also a baby doll lover, Elizabeth took to Annabell immediately (*above*). She listened to the baby coo and suck its bottle and dummy, while whispering, "The baby has gone to sleep. Ssssh."

When Annabell's beanie came off, Elizabeth put it back on with help from Yaitchi. Her imagination ran wild as she announced that Annabell had a tummy ache and would not be able to go out today.

A Thomas the Tank Engine toy, Musical Bubble Thomas, worked well for Elizabeth, too. A switch in the back of the tank engine makes the wheels turn and bubbles come out of its smokestack. She was able to find the switch on the back of the engine and liked to feel the bubbles coming out of Thomas's smokestack with her hands



ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

The toys they tried out:



Homersapien
6 years+,
£69.99



Optimus Prime Helmet
5 years+, £39.99



Dancing Igglepiggle
18 months+, £39.99



New Baby Annabell®
3 years+, £44.99

as well as feel the wheels as they moved across the floor.

A surprise hit was Homersapien, the Homer Simpson robot. Although it was not completely accessible, in that Elizabeth could not operate the robot herself, as the remote control had too many small buttons with directions she couldn't read, she did enjoy following its movements with her hands. The problem, though, was that he couldn't walk very far because she needed to have her hands on him in order to track his movements.

She was slightly startled by Homer's loud voice but got used to it.

LOUISE

Louise's face lit up like a Christmas tree when she first saw Dancing Igglepiggie.

"Whoa, cool," exclaimed Louise, "I like that he laughs, and he's singing too." She happily helped Igglepiggie on with its blanket and enjoyed pressing the button on its foot that set it off on its wiggly dance and song.

"Whoa, he's moving!" she said.

But after a minute or two, Louise (right) was eager to move on to the next toy: the Bratz doll.

Louise ran the tiny hairbrush through its long mane, but found it rather tricky to fit the doll's little fur coat on, because it was very tight, and

“Whoa, cool. I like that he laughs, and he's singing too”

so decided to leave it off.

When one of the doll's earrings fell out, Louise was able to fix it back into the tiny earring hole with a bit of help – though her mother Maggie said, "The little bits are hopeless, really. They don't really work for us – I have to just take them all away. One, Louise's co-ordination is not very good, and two, they just get lost."

So it was on to Baby Annabell, which scored very high marks from Louise.

"She's cute," she said as she took Annabell into her arms, rocked it to sleep and in turn fed it a bottle and gave it a dummy.

"She loves this kind of baby's baby," said Maggie.

Less of a hit was the next toy, Homersapien.

"Gosh, this is rather complicated," said Maggie. Each button has a tiny description above it, but Louise would need help with these and found Homer's loud voice slightly alarming.

Next it was on to Barbie – Princess Rosella, with which Louise had some difficulty.

"The shoes are nice but they need

to be glued on or else they will keep coming off," she said.

The Thomas the Tank Engine toy also left something to be desired.

Maggie felt that it was too young for Louise.

"I might get bored after a while," said Louise, although for the moment she seemed happy to play with Thomas.

The final toy was the Optimus Prime helmet.

Louise seemed keen to give it a try. But the mask came off as quickly as it went on. ■



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Barbie – The Princess Rosella Doll – 3 years+, £24.99



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David Blunkett's most recent association with the media is through that most mom-and-apple-pie image, the American yellow school bus. Having, as home secretary, been responsible for immigration of quite another sort, his idea to bring these vehicles to Britain seems to have been met with universal approval.

“Your hands were absolutely crucial to reading Braille, to writing Braille: to be hit on your hands, when you think back on it, was obscene”

And looking back on his own schooling, in what were called in the 1950s and 60s blind schools, his own memories have that rosy hue. Football played with a ball made audible by having ball bearings inside it, cricket with a ball with a bell in it; crashing and falling off bikes rode too recklessly; and sledging. “We had proper winters in those days, of course,” he adds wistfully.

But you don't have to go far below the surface to get at the darker meat.

“At junior school in Sheffield, I remember I was punished for something I hadn't done. And it was punishment, it was a beating. The stick around the back of the legs, and it was your hands, bearing in mind that your hands were absolutely crucial to reading Braille, to writing Braille. To be hit on your hands, when you think back on it, was obscene.”

These are memories which he and I share – indeed, there was a time when we were both at the same school, a mock castle between Shrewsbury and the Welsh border. And memories aren't the only things we share. There's a lot that troubles many of us who went →

MARK DAVIDSON

School of hard knocks

His schooling may have equipped David Blunkett for the gritty world of politics, but, he tells **Ian Macrae**, he lacked emotional reserves when his personal life was up for grabs



through that special school system.

Blunkett puts it this way. "Actually, the total experience of being at blind school was, in my view, damaging and alienating, because you were taken away from what we'd all agree is a natural family environment."

Words like "damage" and "alienation" clearly echo into his later life. And Blunkett is keen to explore their longer term effects, particularly in relation to how he handled recent personally traumatic events. But he also recognises that the often Dickensian regimes at schools for the blind had other effects on the development of his personality and approach to life.

"I was always a rebel," he says with more than a little pride, "in terms of leading delegations to complain against the food, trying to get something done. And God knows it was terrible, like Dotheboys Hall. That was my first experience of politics and trade unionism, trying to negotiate without any cards in our hands at all. We had no power."

So, on the plus side, he counts resilience, a sink-or-swim survival mechanism and a fierce desire for independence. All of which manifested themselves in his political career and in his aspiration to get away from the traditional and expected routes into employment for people like him with schooling like his.

"If you couldn't see, the options then were much less than they are now, and you knew you had to just do

“The practicalities I'd had to deal with, particularly as home secretary, were pushing me to the absolute boundaries of what a blind person was capable of”

everything to get out of doing what was expected by the rest of the world. I had the option of doing piano tuning or shorthand typing."

While typing was an important additional skill, it did not represent any kind of career option for someone

whose ambition stretched beyond the narrow horizons offered by his education. He has nothing against piano tuning per se – blind piano tuners were and remain among his best friends. But he had no ear for the trade himself. And so it was the long hard slog towards a career in teaching. This may seem a perverse choice for someone whose experience in the education system had so many negative associations, but it was a path chosen by others, too.

He left school, he feels, with more than a deficit in qualifications and opportunities. Of the special school legacy, he says: "It does make you a bit of a difficult person to live with. I've got many friends in the political arena who've stuck with me through thick and thin. But I've also got a lot of people in Parliament who feel that I'm a bit odd really and I'm not one of them. I wish I'd been able to be a bit more sociable 20 years ago."

It's easy to see where his political drive came from. The relative harshness of school regimes, as he's indicated,

almost predisposed him to rebelliousness and a political stance on issues. And circumstances at home would also have fed that fire. Early in his 800-page diaries he reflects not only on the poverty and grind of his working-class origins in Sheffield, but also on the treatment his mother received following the death of his father in an horrific gas-works accident. These were not the days of the litigious compensation culture in which we now live.

Less clear are the origins of his ambition for high political office. "Until I was in my 20s," he says, "I was ambitious to do well, but not necessarily get to the position I did."

Nevertheless, he did achieve high office in local, then in national government. Indeed, there was a time

not that long ago when he was being seriously discussed as potential prime ministerial material. Blunkett himself is somewhat dismissive of this. The only time he might have come close to becoming Prime Minister was when he happened not to be in the Commons when demonstrators from Fathers for Justice threw dyed flour bombs at Tony Blair. "Had that been more than dyed flour, the world would have had me inflicted on it as Prime Minister, at least until the pecking order was sorted out."

In the end, though, it was his sheer pragmatism which curbed any ambition to be first among equals.

"Not in my head did I believe I was going to be Prime Minister. Not that, like some other senior colleagues, I gave way because I thought others were a lot better, but because I

thought that the practicalities I'd had to deal with, particularly as home secretary, were pushing me to the absolute boundaries of what a blind person was capable of."

Whereas sighted colleagues could skim or speed-read the contents of their red boxes, Blunkett had to go through everything word by word, albeit at slightly higher speed, but on tape. Mind you, anyone else saying that he wasn't on his brief would bring out his notorious and self-confessed prickliness.

When shadow cabinet member David Davis said in an interview that Blunkett wasn't on top of his brief, he went on the offensive. "I thought that was outrageous because the one thing that everyone, enemy or otherwise, knew was that I was always on top of →



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my brief. I knew more facts than my opponents and colleagues. I had to."

Ultimately, and perhaps ironically, of course, what brought him down were personal circumstances totally unrelated to his political performance or ability to cope. They were, however, not unrelated to his blindness, or rather to attitudes, particularly those of journalists, towards it.

"When people suggested that it was really quite astonishing that I might have had a relationship with an extremely attractive woman, I did find that offensive because there was an underlying feature all the time that, what would an attractive woman want to go out with a blind guy for? And how did a blind guy manage to get an attractive woman? I do mind people presuming that, because you can't see,

"I was as near to a breakdown as it's possible to get... I looked metaphorically at the ceiling and said 'Am I going mad?'"

you're not as attractive as they are because they can."

And coming back to his schooling, did it have an impact on how he dealt with the harsh glare of celebrity and notoriety? Blunkett thinks his problem is precisely that he was dealing not with politics, for which school had partly equipped him, but with emotions, which it hadn't.

"I couldn't have handled what happened differently because it was

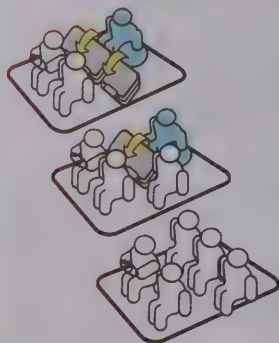


MARK DAVIDSON

down to emotion and not politics. Emotionally, it's always been a problem because you don't turn to people easily. I wouldn't turn to therapy, for instance, when in all honesty I probably needed it. I was as near to a breakdown as it's possible to get. I didn't actually say I'd gone mad. I looked metaphorically at the ceiling and said, 'Am I going mad?' Had I not had such a harsh childhood and that emotional denial I'd have taken therapy."

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Lights, cameras, action

Disability Now's relaunch party was a night to remember. **John Pring** reports

Rarely can so many wheelchair-users have eaten so many canapes at one party. The launch of the new *Disability Now* at the Delfina Galleries in south London featured everything you could hope for at a party: celebrities, witty speeches, good food and drink, glamorous surroundings, origami flowers made from old copies of *Disability Now*... and two accessible loos.

The upbeat tone for the evening on 25 October was set by the minister for disabled people, Anne McGuire, who told guests that she recognised the importance of *Disability Now* and its "fantastic campaigning".

She said: "*Disability Now* is one of those magazines that I look forward to coming into the office, and then I am terrified of opening the front page, because it has been robust, it has been assertive and it has been in the forefront of the campaign for disability equality in this country."

Much taken with the Madonna-esque microphone she was wearing, she then threatened to break into a chorus of *Don't Cry For Me Argentina*.

The young campaigner and Equality 2025 member, Zara Todd, told guests that, as she was old as *Disability Now*,

she might be due for a relaunch herself.

She introduced our new editor, Ian Macrae, who praised our long-serving first editor, Mary Wilkinson, and said *Disability Now* had always "highlighted and campaigned against discrimination".

"Discrimination is born out of fear and ignorance and attitudes which arise from misinformation," he said. "And what *Disability Now* over the last 20-odd years has set out to do is publicize discrimination, but also to set out and change those attitudes by spreading the right information and questioning fear."

He promised that the magazine would "say the things that disabled people are saying all the time, but no-one else dares to say".

"But," he added, "we will also dare to say the things that no-one else allows disabled people to say."

To ensure the evening's political balance, the Conservative's shadow minister for disabled people, Mark Harper MP, also attended the party.

He was joined by a string of well-known activists and campaigners, including Rachel Hurst, David Morris, Dr Paul Darke, Agnes Fletcher and Peter Barker.

From the media world, there were the BBC's Peter White, Channel Four's

editorial manager for disability, Alison Walsh, ITV newscaster and Scope patron Alastair Stewart, artist and writer Ju Gosling and Abnormally Funny People's Simon Minty.

The younger activists were well represented, too, with the likes of Katie Caryer and Toby Hewson.

Other celebrities included Paralympians Ade Adepitan and Anne Wafula-Strike, actress Kim Tserkezie, loved by millions of toddlers as *Balamory's* Penny Pocket, actor Paul Henshall, and Dan Gillespie Sells, lead singer of The Feeling.

In fact, Gillespie Sells was almost overshadowed by his mother, Kathrine, a veteran disability activist and a founding member of Regard, which raises disability awareness among the gay and lesbian communities.

Above: Paul Henshall and Kim Tserkezie. Right: clockwise, from top-left, Anne McGuire, Alastair Stewart and Ian Macrae; Katie Caryer and Mary Wilkinson; Toby Hewson and Zara Todd; Ade Adepitan and Anne Wafula-Strike; Simon Minty, Steve Scott and Michael Shamash; and Peter White, Ian Macrae and Dan Gillespie Sells. *Photography by Mark Davidson*





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yourviews

What you think about the new-look *Disability Now*

May I be among the first to sincerely congratulate all the team on their efforts in producing the excellent, new-style *Disability Now* magazine. This new, manageable size, along with the clarity of the layout, are winners all round.

Alan de Derval et de Moisdon, editor, Law and Benefit Review

Congratulations on the new-style magazine. It is a big improvement on the "newspaper" design.

Beryl Clark, Norton Stourbridge, West Midlands

I love the new format of the magazine. Much easier to hold and read.

Joan Deverell, Wrexham

Congratulations on the new format of *Disability Now*. Apart from the fact it does away with light reflection – a problem for me – the layout is excellent.

Arthur Roberts, by email

Warmest congratulations on your new look – much more accessible. I may be wrong, but I think that the "Anne Begg" photograph on page 10 is actually an image of Rosalie Wilkins. With

renewed congratulations and thanks.

Sam Gallop CBE, consultant, Parliamentary Limb Loss Group; president, Employment Opportunities; chair emPOWER

Editor's note: Yes, the picture on page 10 was, of course, of Baroness Wilkins, and not Anne Begg MP. Apologies for the mix-up.

I like the new-look mag – I think it's great. It is much easier to open and hold. Thanks for a great magazine.

John Oldham, by email

I very much like the new format. An excellent job.

Simon Hook, Monmouth

I do like your new magazine. Much easier to handle than the old one. Congratulations.

Margaret Shrigley, Aldridge, West Midlands

I love the format of the new *Disability Now* magazine. Congratulations for all your efforts and hard work.

Anthony Smith, Cambridge

As a non-disabled person and reader of your great publication, I would like to say how wonderful I found



the size. It was so easy to use. The old format was very cumbersome to carry and use. Keep up the good work.

Sharon Quinn, by email

I notice there is no section for carers. Isn't it about time carers were "included" rather than "excluded"?

I know we carers get used to being ignored by disability organisations, but we are part of the disabled community, so why no carer section?

Clive Arnold, by email

Editor's note: There are other newspaper and magazine outlets for expressing the views and concerns of carers. Disability Now is here to provide a voice directly for disabled people, which otherwise goes largely unheard.

We disabled people yearn for equality with our able-bodied fellow human beings. The new format of *Disability Now* is a step in that direction and is much more akin to a mainstream magazine. I congratulate you.

Spencer Arnott, Holmer Green, Buckinghamshire

I have to say the new edition is far superior to the earlier publications. My only disappointment is the cost. I am registered disabled and I find mobility a problem. I receive DLA and mobility allowance but no other benefits or income. So to be asked to pay for your magazine because my benefits are not listed on your letter (to receive free copies of *DN* you must show proof of entitlement, etc) is very disappointing and upsetting.

My husband pays all our bills and I try to be independent as best as I can, and buy my own publications but I cannot afford to subscribe to your excellent and much-needed magazine.

Norma Godstone, Whitefield, Manchester

Editor's note: We're currently discussing our freebies and concessions policy. For a limited time you can subscribe to the new magazine at the old price.



yourviews

Equality by 2025 is 'high on government agenda'

Andy Rickell is right to highlight the challenge we face in achieving equality for disabled people (*Disability Now November, Andy Rickell*). He could not be more wrong in predicting that we will fail or that disability equality is peripheral to our priorities. I can assure him it is not.

I am working closely with ministers in other departments and the Office for Disability Issues to make equality for all disabled people by 2025 a reality.

I recognise there are those who may want to see progress at a more rapid pace – and there are areas where we've still got a way to go. But progress there is. And this progress is based on the Life Chances report, which was extensively discussed and agreed with disabled people themselves.

Indeed, if we are to create real and lasting change we must be careful to listen to all disabled people – including those who are seldom heard – and involve them directly at every stage as we plan for change and make it happen.



As this letter goes to print, Andy and his fellow members of Equality 2025, the government's advisory network of

I recognise there are those who may want a more rapid pace - and there are areas where we've still got a way to go

disabled people, are holding their first public conference in Birmingham. I will be listening carefully, along with my fellow ministers, to the messages from that meeting, and will continue to take this agenda forward.

Anne McGuire MP, minister for disabled people (pictured above)

'I don't understand Thorpe case mother'

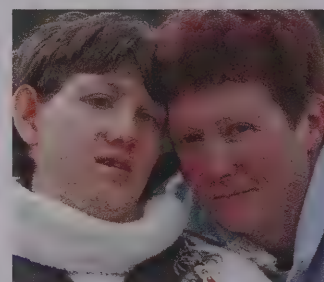
I agreed fully with the sentiments expressed by Emma Bowler (*Disability Now November, Media Watch*) in relation to the mother who wants her disabled daughter to undergo a hysterectomy.

I have a daughter [with learning difficulties] myself. Bethany has no speech or language, is doubly incontinent and has severe behavioural problems. She started her menstrual cycle at 13 and I've never once considered removing her womb, even though she does have some mild discomfort each month.

Even for a young [disabled] person, going through adolescence is a natural progression. I have the utmost sympathy for Alison Thorpe – but I cannot understand the comment she made about removing the womb being OK, because Katie doesn't need it. That would be like removing the legs of someone who is paralysed.

The parents of disabled children are like any other parent – they don't always make the right choice or decision. And is the choice for the benefit of them or their child?

Sarah Treweeks, Erdington, Birmingham



PETER LAWSON/REX FEATURES

Thorpe case: 'I know how Alison feels'

I am incensed by the one-sided views expressed in the articles relating to Angela Thorpe and her disabled daughter Katie (*Disability Now November*).

As the mother of a severely disabled 13-year-old girl, I completely understand why Angela Thorpe has approached specialists and doctors with a view to permanently end menstruation for Katie.

My daughter, Megan, has the mental age of a child between six and 12 months. Every month she could potentially feel discomfort from stomach cramps. Megan cannot ask me for paracetamol and a hot water bottle and retire to bed, as I did in my teenage years. Megan has no biological need for periods. She will never have a sexual relationship, let alone children.

I am incensed at the narrow-mindedness of some "campaigners" who believe they are "speaking for the disabled person".

I can wholeheartedly say

that if you asked Megan if she wanted periods, and she was able to understand the question, and answer, I know what her answer would be.

Penny Washbrook,
Colchester, Essex

Pressing for changes in hate crime law

I read with interest your article on hate crime (*Disability Now November, Campaigns*). Hate crime is a subject we are currently pressing for changes on, and for the correct classification of these crimes.

When you consider some of the recent cases that have reached the press, you cannot help but be appalled at the treatment of its victims. I have tried to make some internal enquires to discover how crimes have been reported but alas have had little success.

The first case is of the lady who was filmed on a mobile phone by a group, while one of them urinated on her. It appears from the reports in the press that he was convicted of a public decency offence and received three years – why were others not charged with a crime? Surely this was a joint enterprise and all would have an element of guilt. And why public decency? Why not assault?

The other case that comes to mind is the elderly gentleman who was

assaulted on the tram in Croydon, resulting in him losing the sight in one eye. He uses sticks to walk. I have made enquiries if this was recorded as a hate crime, but have received no reply.

On behalf of the National Disabled Police Association (NDPA), I would offer our wholehearted support in this endeavour.

Scott Westbrook,
chair, NDPA

Saddened by Ashley X doctor's suicide

I read with some sadness of the suicide of Dr Daniel Gunther, who was at the centre of the Ashley X case (*Disability Now November, World View*). While I am extremely opposed to what happened to Ashley X, and now [possibly] Katie Thorpe, no-one should feel the need to end their lives over it, assuming that was the reason.

Dr Gunther should have been tried for assault and other offences, and be allowed to serve his time and reform himself, maybe becoming a positive advocate for the rights of disabled people.

We are all victims of our positions within society and



HTTP://ASHLEYTREATMENTSPACES.LIVE.COM/BLOG

it is only by negotiation and working together that we can achieve real understanding and equality.

Simon Stevens, chief executive, Enable Enterprises

Choice is the key to mainstream work

With respect to the letter about Remploi (*Disability Now November, Your Views*), choice is the important key to all of this. I am pleased it is possible that all jobs are now available to everyone these days, and about time too. But some people choose to work in supported employment, just because they want to, or find it impossible to work in mainstream employment.

Don't you think everyone should have the choice to work where they want, just like everyone else does?

Peter Hain has finally realised supported

employment is important and must be maintained, along with work in the mainstream if you can manage to do that.

I support what he did. Again, I want to choose.

Richard Cook, Unite member of TUC disability committee

Remembering the past embraces all

We are now less than 100 days from Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), as mentioned by Agnes Fletcher (*Disability Now November, Guest Column*).

We can remember the experiences of our forebears and use this remembrance to commit to a better future. We can recognise the ongoing situation in Darfur and make a commitment to challenge international responses to genocide. We can also remember all the diverse people affected by Nazi racial and social policies, including physically disabled people and those with mental health issues who faced forced euthanasia and sterilisation.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust encourages all communities to remember the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and ongoing discrimination today and can provide support and advice for disability groups.

Louise Hector, community liaison manager, Holocaust Memorial Trust

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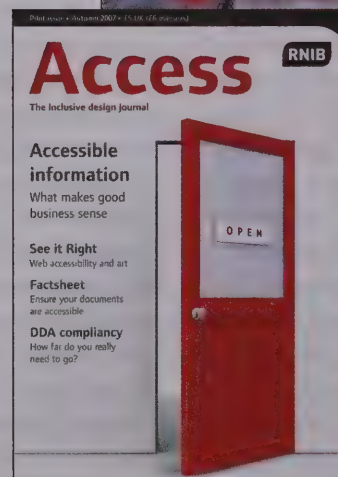
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andyrickell



Unequal treatment

The NHS often helps to maintain or even spread disablist attitudes, says **Andy Rickell**

If we intend to banish disablism, we must tackle the beliefs that keep it going. As disablism is a deep-seated issue, we have to challenge some powerful interests.

The ultimate origin of disablist behaviour and institutional disablism is disablist attitudes – the belief that people with impairments are second-class citizens, not fully human, and therefore not entitled to equal treatment with unimpaired people.

Two key propagators of these attitudes are our current health services and the media. This time, let's think about health services. The NHS: a very powerful interest indeed!

I believe that medical professionals genuinely seek to do their best, with dedication, skill, and a belief that they support people's human rights.

However, their operating environment at least perpetuates disablism, and may add to it.

The high level of medical understanding of the professional, and their role as gatekeeper to services,

compared to the relative ignorance of the disabled person, creates a power imbalance in the relationship, which renders the disabled person unnecessarily dependent on the professional's judgement. This must be equalised, by

We need an NHS which champions the right to life

supporting disabled people so that we know much more about our conditions and their management, and also by professionals listening to us as experts on our needs. Disabled people need "choice and control" over our health and any medical interventions too.

Secondly, society requires major judgements by medical professionals in decisions on "quality of life" – from providing life-saving treatment, to decisions about rationed resources, including equipment and therapy. Anecdotal evidence from disabled people suggests serious underestimation of quality of life for disabled people by professionals. This affects treatment decisions,

and the negative attitudes that professionals impart to disabled people and their families. Medical professionals' training must include an understanding of the positive reality of disabled people's lives.

Thirdly, there is an emphasis on surgical and drug interventions rather than therapeutic ones, and a low priority given to supporting rapid rehabilitation. We need a model which meets the holistic health needs of the disabled person for getting on with their life rather than treating them as malfunctioning equipment that can be sidelined, and which also recognises the role that self-image, self-identity and self-esteem play in a disabled person's overall health.

Finally, there is the belief that medical advance is the ultimate answer to eradicating impairment, in the extreme reflected by the geneticist who said: "One day, it will be a sin to have a

disabled baby." Not in my Bible. What is fascinating about this proposal is both the value judgment, which is superstitious and unbiblical, and its unscientific approach to impairment. Some impairment is indeed susceptible to ethical medical advance – great, let's encourage it. But some impairment is environmental, eg injury, emotional distress; some is due to human mortality, eg bodily wear and tear, and some can only be eradicated by destroying the person, eg genetic conditions.

To overturn these disablist attitudes, we need an NHS which positively and publicly champions the right to life in all its fullness for all citizens, and uses its power to educate the public in an understanding of health and well-being that acknowledges impairment as a normal part of a healthy society's communal life.

• **Andy Rickell is an executive director at Scope**

→ Have your say

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asktheexperts

you ask, they answer



The experts: Simon Parritt, Kate Sheehan, John Mandrak, Linda Clarke, Andy Wright, Ed Passant, Alan Barton, David Clarke

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q My sister has been paralysed in a car accident overseas and is considering returning to live in the UK (she has been abroad for the past seven years but now needs the support of family and friends back home).

Is there an information source that could tell her where there is a wheelchair-friendly place to live in the proximity of west London? And secondly, is there an information source that could tell her how to go about finding accommodation?

Dawn, London, via email

KS: It has to be said that due to the long history of London, it is not generally speaking a very accessible town, and because of the age and nature of its built environment is never going to be completely inclusive.

However, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has introduced a very comprehensive plan to

make the city as inclusive as possible. This includes a policy to build all new properties to Lifetime Home Standards (www.lifetimehomes.org.uk) and ten per cent to be designed to be wheelchair-accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair-users.

The GLA also launched its Accessible Housing Register in September 2007. Although in its infancy, it could be a good source of information (www.london.gov.uk).

There are a number of estate agencies which are

beginning to pick up on the need for more information for clients in this area and I have noted three below.

www.accessible-property.org.uk
www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk
www.thelittlehousecompany.co.uk

If your sister is eligible for public housing, she would need to contact the local authority in the area she wishes to live and discuss the availability of housing. Two very well-known housing associations who have a track record in providing excellent inclusive

housing are Habinteg (www.habinteg.org.uk) and Ability Housing Association (www.ability-housing.co.uk).

Finally, if money is not a constraining factor, I would employ a personal house-finder to do all the searching for you. Just remember to give them a concise, prioritised list of your needs.

Q I have been asked to write to you and convey this tale of woe by one of your readers. I have been battling with Ipswich Borough Council for a few years to have public rights of way made accessible for disabled people. One gate in particular I cannot get through in my wheelchair and eventually I made a county court claim of disability discrimination. As soon as the claim form was received by the council, the gate was removed. At court, the

council admitted the gate could not be accessed by wheelchair-users and I thought I had won the case. Imagine my shock to hear the judge dismiss my case as having no merit and ordering me to pay £1,000 in costs! The judge said I should use a gate more than a mile away from my house instead!

Peter Turtill, Open Spaces Society Ipswich correspondent, Ipswich

LC: Your reader tells of an unfortunate (and costly) experience which illustrates common misconceptions about enforcing the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in the county court and highlights some difficulties experienced by those bringing claims themselves.

The two most common relating to this letter are:

1 The majority of DDA access cases centre around alternative means of access to a facility or service (where there is a physical obstacle) and are rarely about the existence of the obstacle. The DDA requires removal of the

physical obstacle only where the alternative is impossible or unreasonably difficult to use or, as expressed by the judge in the Roads v Central Railways case, where no ambulant person would use that alternative. The claimant has to prove this.

If the reader had focused on the unreasonableness of the alternative access (that it was over a mile away from his house), he might have been prepared for the judge's reaction and argued accordingly, citing the Roads case.

2 Underestimating the financial risks of county court actions. There are three tracks in the county court. Historically, DDA claims are allocated to the small claims track (SCT) because the compensation awards are usually under £5,000. The SCT limits awards to a winner in that track (by excluding the winner's legal costs) but only after allocation. In the writer's case, his claim appears to have been dismissed before allocation, so the limits would not apply.

RELATIONSHIPS

SIMON PARRITT

Simon is a chartered counselling psychologist who has also studied psychosexual therapy. He was the only disabled director of the former Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD).

FINANCE

DAVID CLARKE

David has spent 14 years in the banking industry and has worked for three leading financial service providers. He is a senior partner of Clydesdale Bank.

PROPERTY

KATE SHEEHAN

Kate is a director of Better Living and an occupational therapist with 20 years experience and a passionate interest in housing. Better Living works with manufacturers to meet the needs of the ageing population.

LEGAL & BENEFITS

LINDA CLARKE

Linda is director of Disability Law Service (DLS). DLS is the only service controlled and managed by disabled people that offers free legal advice to disabled people, families and carers.

EQUIPMENT

JOHN MANDRAK

John, who is blind, has worked in the disability sector for nearly 25 years, mainly as a disability journalist and consultant. He is an adviser on the Disabled Living Foundation's helpline.

TRAVEL

ANDY WRIGHT

Andy is a disabled travel industry professional with over 25 years experience and is managing director of Accessible Travel, a specialist tour operator providing holidays for people with mobility impairments.

MOTORING

ED PASSANT

Ed is chief executive of the Forum of Mobility Centres. The centres provide driver and passenger assessment for disabled people across the UK.

MONEY, LEGAL AND OTHER PROBLEMS

ALAN BARTON

Alan is a social policy advisor for Citizens Advice, and an advisor at Rickmansworth Citizens Advice Bureau in Hertfordshire. He has a particular interest in benefits issues.

→ If you have a question for our panel

- phone us 020 7619 7323
- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

backchat

No Hain, no gain



Disabled people don't exactly seem a top priority for our current secretary of state for work and pensions.

Peter Hain MP didn't endear himself to Backchat with a half-hearted handshake and a borderline snub at a ministerial summer drinks party for the press.

He followed it up with a twisty-turny performance over the proposed Remploy factory closures, leaving both sides confused as to whether government policy really had changed.

If that wasn't enough, he has now wriggled out of an interview with *Disability Now* over the government's welfare reform plans.

An interview was promised during the Labour conference in September. Nearly two months on, we're still waiting. Is he scared?

Woolly hats still the order of the day



For a few sweet minutes last month, care services minister Ivan Lewis seemed to be fulfilling his early ministerial promise.

Mr Lewis was quoted in a Department of Health press release advising older people to prepare for the cold weather.

He talked about the

"millions of pounds of grants available to help with insulation and heating systems", and went on to say how winter fuel payments were available to "help older people, those on low incomes and disabled people".

This roused Backchat from a post-launch party slumber. Were our years of campaigning for winter fuel payments to be extended to severely disabled people finally about to bear fruit?

However, a government press officer promptly chopped down that particular apple tree. "It's a mistake on our part," he confessed.

But let's look on the bright side. It's great news for manufacturers of blankets, scarves, woolly hats and hot-water bottles.

Mills, but no boon



Backchat can only commiserate with Phil Hall, the former agent of Heather Mills.

Just days after Mrs Macca managed to paint a positive picture of herself with an exclusive interview in *Disability Now*, she decided to undo all the good work by imploding live on national television.

After her outburst, Hall quit (as her agent), closely followed by her divorce lawyers, Mishcon de Reya. Backchat, meanwhile, just buried his head in his hands.

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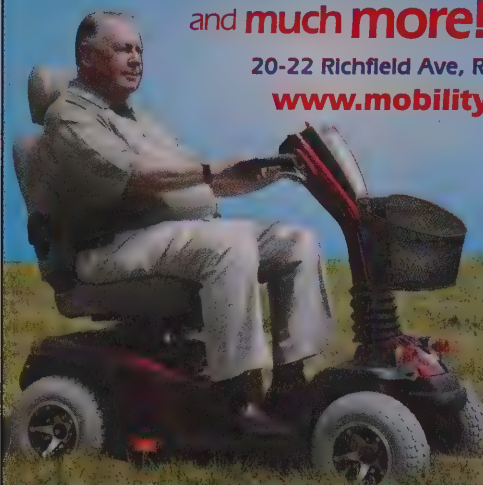
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Why does joining the jet set have to be such a pain?

Simon Stevens wonders why everyone treats him like a complete idiot from the moment he books his flight – and all the more so if he's travelling alone

I have always loved flying and the air of excitement it brings. But for myself and many disabled people, air travel brings added stresses and obstacles, which you just would not believe.

The drama begins the moment you book the tickets. Even if you book online, you still have to ring up to book assistance and be interrogated about your condition. I now check each item of hand luggage with them (bib, cup, spoon) is permitted on the plane just in case they are considered weapons of mass destruction. Plus, if you are unlucky, you will be asked for a dreaded doctor's note.

Arriving at the airport, parking is the first nightmare as traffic wardens demand superhero qualities when offloading.

So finally we make it to check-in and my first panic of the day: did I over-pack? With nappies, wet suit, bibs and medications, I am not sure I have ever been within the weight limit, but always just smiled and no-one has ever dared complain.

While I am now always asked to bring my blue

badge to prove I am disabled, for some reason I am never asked to show it.

After check-in, the journey becomes like an episode of *The Prisoner* as the wheelchair arrives and I start shouting, "I am not a number" as I am escorted to the plane. It is better now, as they don't leave you in the corner for hours on end and you can go shopping and have a pee.

It is now time to board the aircraft, and after 20 questions from the cabin

The cabin crew often ask me if I am on my own. I reply, 'I hope so'

crew on how the hell they think they can get me on board, I am finally in my seat. Then the fun really begins.

The first thing I notice is the shock when the cabin crew realise I am all on my own. They will often ask me if I am indeed on my own. I look around and reply, "I hope so!"

On my last flight, the look of mild shock seemed to



ANDREW STUART/PA WIRE/PA PHOTOS

Crowd-stopper: check-in desks at Heathrow Airport Terminal 1

turn into panic, resulting in the cabin crew placing a box of tissues at the front of my seat without so much as a word. Was my drooling considered a weapon of mass destruction?

The strangest thing that happened to me on a flight was when I asked for help cutting up my food and the steward started feeding me. I tried saying no, but food kept being put in my mouth!

On arrival, disabled

people are always asked to wait for assistance and have the joy of freaking out passport control, baggage handlers and customs.

Despite how important some items I pack are to my wellbeing, my baggage has been lost twice. The last time was for a weekend.

So when I hear how easy flying is nowadays, I just start banging my head on the nearest brick wall.

Thank god for my helmet.

→ Have your say

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upclose&personal



EMMA BOWLER

Two little boys

Was passing on her impairment to her son a reason to feel guilty, asks **Emma Bowler**

I was recently asked if I thought I had been selfish having a baby, knowing I had a 50:50 chance of passing on my disability. Whilst the disability activist in me might have argued that I have the right to have a baby, the maternal part of me now realises that the answer is not clear-cut.

I have Kniest Syndrome, which means I'm four feet tall and don't have the best mobility. Ultrasound scans indicated that our first baby, Archie, was going to have Kniest, but by the time he was due the initial guilt I felt had turned into protectiveness; at least I knew what I was in for, as I had the same disability.

When Archie was a few months old, I took him to my consultant and she said: "He's just a baby like any other baby, so go away and enjoy him." And that's exactly what we did. OK, he was smaller than other babies, he wasn't as boisterous as most, and it took him ages to walk solo; but to us he was normal.

I maintained that feeling of normality by not going out of my way to come into contact with children of the same age as Archie, therefore avoiding any cause to feel selfish or guilty about having passed on my disability because those situations would have involved comparing him to his peers and therefore highlighted his difference. Then I had Ben.

Ben is "Mr Normal Baby". Not even one, he's into everything: falling off the bed, climbing stairs, escaping into the garden – all normal things, but things Archie didn't do. He is also, despite the two-year gap between them, almost as big as Archie. In fact, some people have mistaken them for twins, until Archie starts chatting away.

There's no avoiding comparing Archie with Ben, and the difference in their size, agility and mobility is stark.

When Archie started school a few weeks ago, there was finally no avoiding comparison with his peers. My original guilt reared its head once more: I worried about how Archie would be seen by his peers and whether he would now start to realise he was different.

As with most of my worries, they are already starting to come loose at the seams. Archie's classmates seem to have taken a shine

to him; I think he brings out the maternal side of little girls whose attention he is more than happy to have! And rather than see himself as different, he seems to be

He's just a baby like any other baby, so go away and enjoy him

thinking: "Why can't I do what they are doing?"

He now has a playmate who is always riding on his tractor, something he was scared of using before. After seeing her on it, he realised he wanted to try it; he's now quite happily freewheeling down slopes – so while before I was worried about him being timid, now I'm worried about him falling off!

Perhaps this is an analogy for the way things will go for him now he's with his peers. Once again, I will put my guilt to bed. Well, for the moment at least.



Mother's pride: Emma with her sons Ben and Archie

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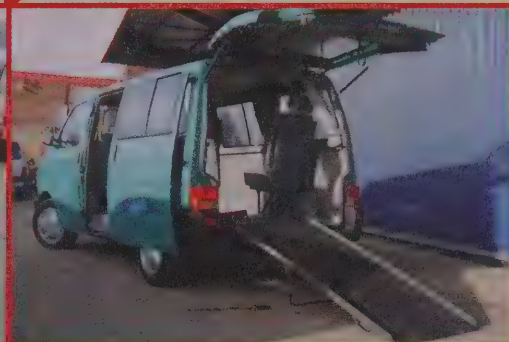


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MARK DAVIDSON

It's not **easy** being **green**

Can you be cool, green and disabled, asks writer and performer **Penny Pepper**

I am in my green kitchen, sat in the latest super-chic powerchair. It has recycled batteries recharged from solar panels. I drink from a sleek designer mug, made from recycled material. The light bulb is low energy and all around me my appliances are set to work at minimal energy output. I am dressed in quality green designer clothes made from ethically sourced natural materials. I'm drinking organic apple juice, from fruit grown in this country. My mains power is from a mini wind turbine and my water supply is recycled from the rain.

Too good to be true? Sadly, yes; I live on an estate and doubt my social housing

association would tune into this scenario I aspire to. As it is, I hazard that I live at about 30 per cent green. I recycle glass, paper and plastic, buy organic selectively and do not buy cosmetics tested on animals or from unethical sources. In general, I try to incorporate green into my life as much as possible, a focus that goes back to my hippy-punk teenage years.

Yet as my personal politics as a disabled person sharpened, I became acutely conscious of the dilemmas of being green and having a reasonably accessible lifestyle. And these dilemmas remain, right into the 21st century, as we are seemingly being left behind in the race

to be ecologically sound.

We may not be the only niche group to have less disposable income for environmentally-friendly living but the odds are stacked higher. One example

My mains power is from a mini wind turbine and my water supply is recycled from the rain

— we are not in a strong position to buy the coolest car with the latest energy-efficient gizmos, especially if we have to load on the cost of access and expensive adaptations. If we give up

hopes of owning a car, many "green" car-sharing schemes do not have wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Technology is often an excellent means of removing barriers for disabled people, and I am no exception. I love my computer with voice-to-text, my cinema surround sound set-up, all the way to my little MP3 player. These things make life enjoyable and importantly they lessen barriers. Yet the negative pay-off must be increased energy consumption.

Clothes are another matter. I am an avid believer in retro-recycled clothing that can be sourced from secondhand shops. Retro is fashionable right now,

and while I will never be convinced by 70s bell bottoms, I am in favour of resisting identikit global shop chains which do little to support appropriate clothing for disabled people anyhow. Retro clothing is altered easily, and has a stamp of individuality while being a greener choice.

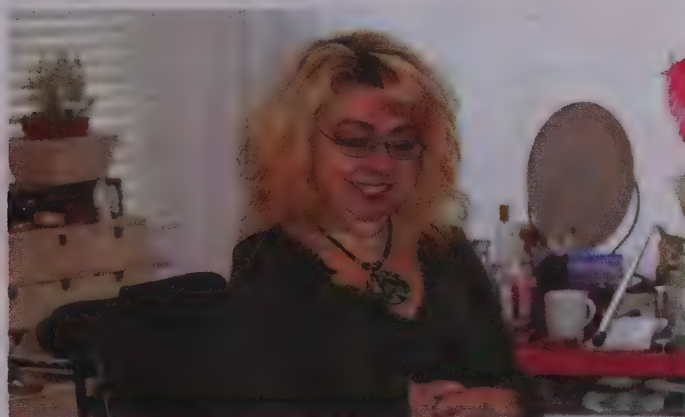
In the wider sense, disabled people appear to be the exception to the green rule – this is both frustrating and discriminatory. It is unsurprising we are not an obvious part of the green equation, although it is hardly an inclusive approach to one of the most serious issues facing the planet.

On the surface, to be disabled is to be a greedy guzzler of energy and resources. A quick web search on “green/ecological and disabled” elicits nothing spectacularly relevant apart from the Green Party’s statement on disability, which is soundly social model – but, strangely, does not mention anything remotely eco when it comes

to combining disability with ecological concerns.

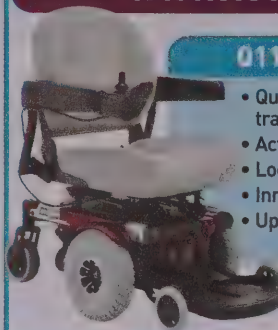
The reality is we may need more warmth, we need equipment and hi-tech hardware that gobbles up electricity, and we need the cheapest food and products, as we are statistically caught in the benefits trap, which keeps us passive, and in poverty. What chance has a green consciousness against that?

So access, or lack of it, may be the crucial defining factor. Access in the sense of having enough income to buy into that green ideal. And in the end, for us all, disabled or non-disabled, it is ironic that those things which may make us green currently cost the most money. At this point in time, a sharpening of our own awareness may be the best way forward – questioning how much energy equipment uses, from wheelchair batteries to the latest type-talk gadget, so that manufacturers start to realise disabled people do have a green conscience as much as anyone else.



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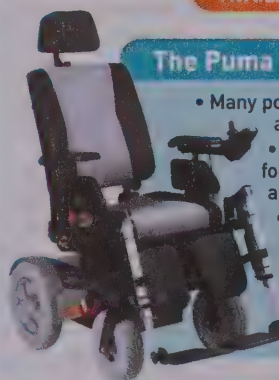
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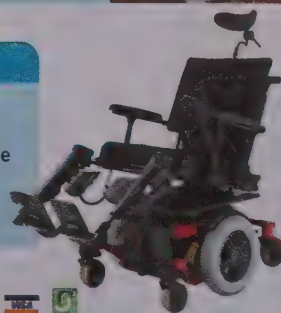


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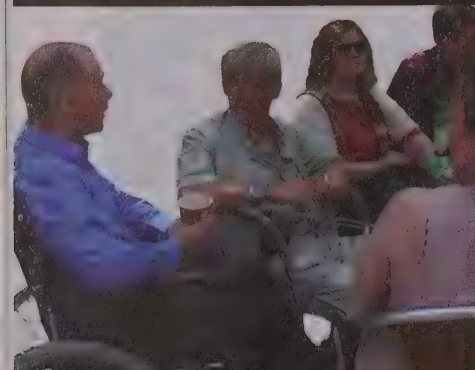
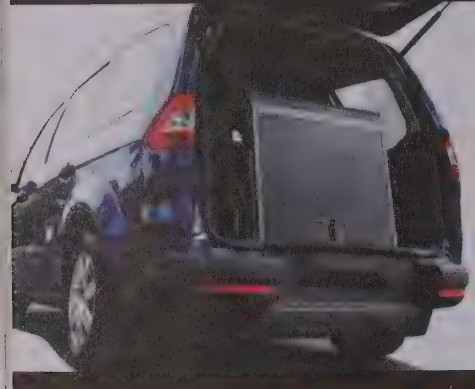
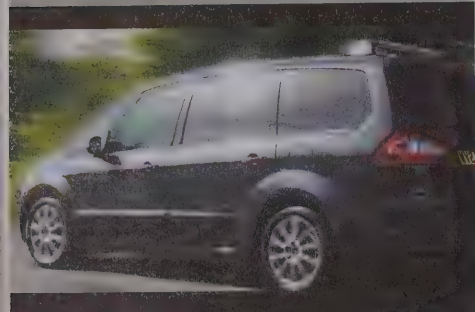
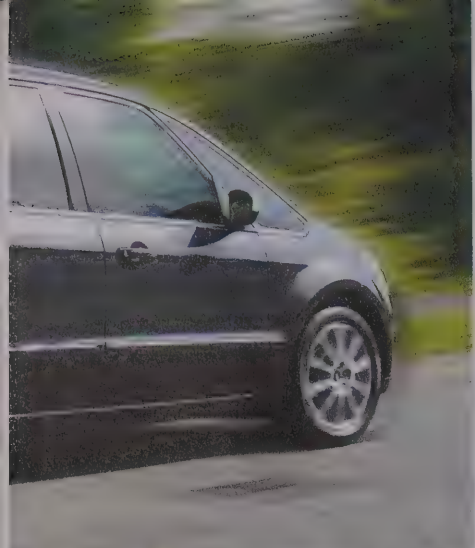
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Exporting Scouse nous

A group of people with learning difficulties from Merseyside has tackled negative stereotypes by volunteering in Kenya. **Elizabeth Choppin** reports

Tackling negative stereotypes of disability is an uphill battle around the world, not least in developing nations with limited resources and a varied understanding of basic human rights.

But a group of disabled people from the UK recently set out to do just that.

In September, six adults with learning difficulties, along with their support staff from Merseyside charity Options for Supported Living, spent two weeks in rural Kenya taking part in various projects serving the local community.

One of the core aims of the mission was to challenge the view that people with learning difficulties are only recipients of “care” or “support”, and to show that they can contribute to a better world.

In the village of Njarange, the team prepared a newly constructed multi-purpose classroom, which it had previously raised the money for, and which will be used by various groups, including disabled children.

“We helped paint and decorate the children’s school and it made me so happy, it was fantastic,” says participant David Warhurst.

“We wanted to help poor,

disabled people have a better life and they were really happy with our help. I have now sponsored a child called Henri to help him with his educational needs.

“I found it really enjoyable. It was not difficult at all. I’d love to go back again.”

The team also ran workshops in partnership with Kenyan charity Napkenya, to help educate

families with disabled children and to encourage a more “inclusive vision”.

Peter Murray, coordinator for Options for Supported Living, a group that provides support for disabled people who want to live independently, says: “People with disabilities can also be hidden in Kenyan society. We encouraged a more inclusive vision – one of integrating people with disabilities into society.” He added that the group had shared their experience of independent living: “We shared how thinking has changed in Britain...the shift from institutional care to community-based independent living with support.”

Mr Murray adds: “By enabling six people with learning disabilities to be active in serving others in Kenya, our hope is that we have modelled value and respect towards people with disabilities, and that this would have a positive impact upon local people’s attitudes and perceptions towards people with disabilities in their own communities.”

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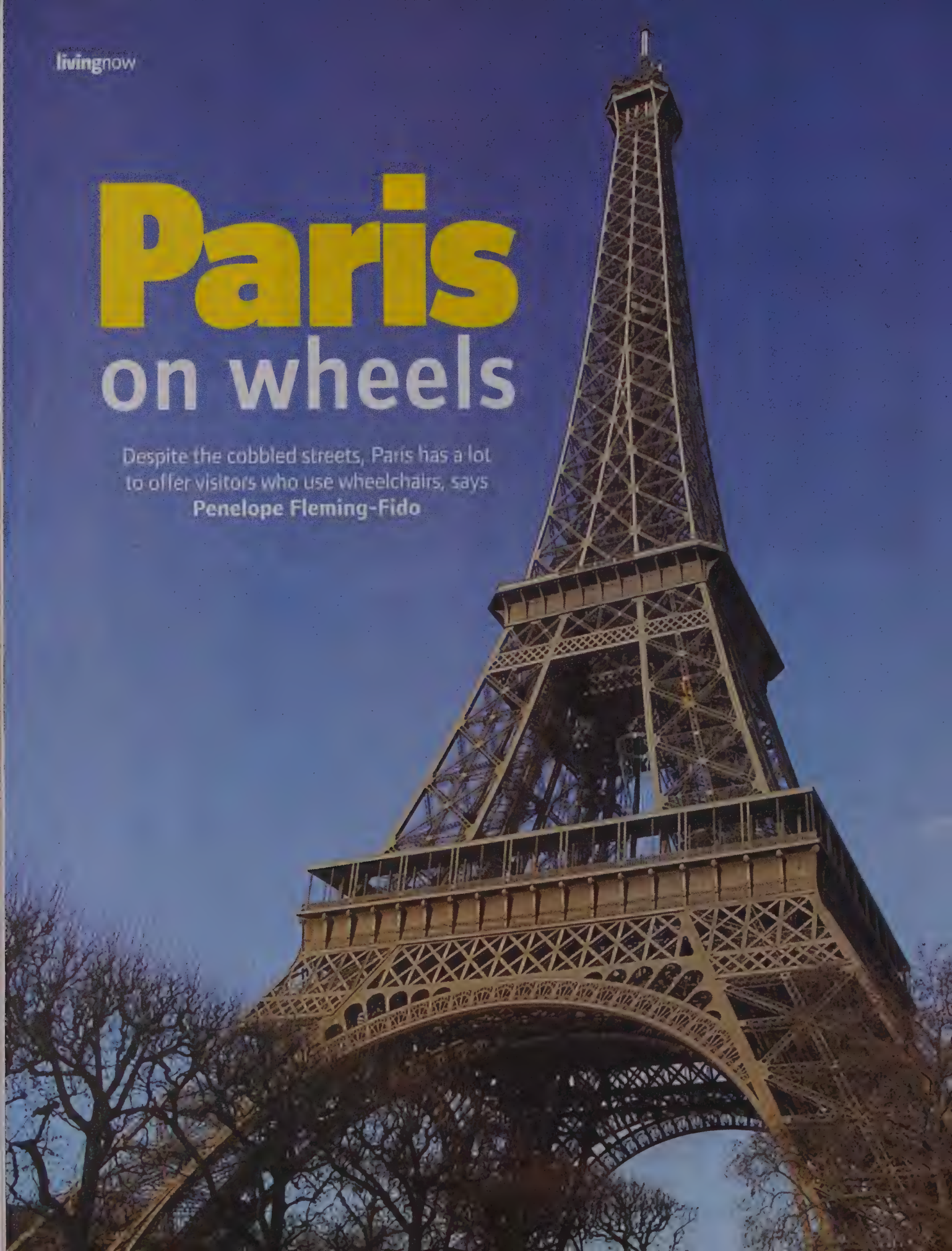
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livingnow

Paris on wheels

Despite the cobbled streets, Paris has a lot
to offer visitors who use wheelchairs, says
Penelope Fleming-Fido



Paris in the height of summer is a beautiful place to visit, with the river Seine basking in the shadow of the glorious Eiffel Tower. A magnificent place indeed, one would say – but what is it like for people in wheelchairs?

On my trip to Paris, I was based to the east of the city in a small hotel by the side of the ring-road. The only way to the centre of the city was by RER (the urban rail network operating in and around Paris), because the taxi prices would have been extortionate. However, here I experienced my first problem...

Lifts? What lifts?

Anyone would think I had been asking for the moon. The RER assistants were very kind and helped lift my wheelchair up the stairs to the platform, but there were no elevators, although other stations did have them. The one thing I could count on was the help and politeness of the staff. I found out later – as perhaps I should have done before I started – that a guide to accessible stations was available from the Paris transport authority, RATP.

But as for the Metro...OK, maybe I was mad even to try it. The looks of the French travellers told me I was – who on earth, they seemed to be saying, would try and take a wheelchair on the Metro? Probably I would have the same experience in London – I haven't tried that yet. At any rate, I can confirm that it is conceivably possible to use the Metro, even if you are in a wheelchair – but make sure that you go with someone very fit and strong!

Finally, we emerged onto the sunny

Did you know?

The Paris Plage every summer transforms 3km of the Seine waterfront into a beach, with sand, palm trees and deckchairs.



Out of bounds: most of Notre Dame is inaccessible to wheelchair-users

streets of Paris, where ancient buildings jostle for position with the modish shops of the city centre. Our first visit was to the Louvre, and though the building itself was closed because it was a Tuesday (other visitors be warned!), the famous glass pyramids and fountains outside were well worth a visit – and easily accessible.

Later, we wandered through the Jardin des Tuileries, which lounges lazily in front of the Louvre, a beautiful area filled with fountains and very easy on the wheelchair. We went up to the Place de la Concorde, where the Obélisque stands on the edge of the world famous Champs Élysées (familiar as the ending of the Tour de France cycle race). At the far end of this, the Arc de Triomphe can be seen and admired, though the Champs Élysées itself is too much of a main road to make going right up to the arch a worthwhile trip.

The Jardin des Tuileries area notwithstanding, there are very few official pedestrianised areas – though a lot of the backstreets rarely see a car. However, it is best to

Who on earth, they seemed to be saying, would try and take a wheelchair on the Metro?

keep on the pavements.

There are a few problems associated with trying to use the pavements in Paris, however. Paris is renowned for its street cafés, and while it is probably easy for a non-disabled person to squeeze themselves past the tables and chairs, sadly my wheelchair has never quite got the idea of squashing itself up to get through a small gap.

Of course, this makes a convenient reason to stop at every café, sample the coffee and watch the world go by...

The second problem is crossing roads. There are many traffic lights with little green men calling you across, but rarely are there slopes in the pavements to make it easy to get the wheelchair down into the road and back up the other side. Often, scarily, the lights would change before we had navigated getting back onto the pavement. →

There are also a number of cobbled streets around the city, which, while they look pretty, can be rather bumpy for wheelchair-users. The solid tyres that are regularly being used on wheelchairs now may save on punctures, but they do not soften the jolts from bumpy pavements in the same way that air-filled tyres do. Having two of each type of tyre, I was only half jolted!

The most famous places in Paris vary in their ability to cater for wheelchair-users. While the Centre Pompidou

Did you know?

Pere Lachaise cemetery, the final resting place of famous figures such as Oscar Wilde and Jim Morrison, covers 116 acres and is one of the largest cemeteries in the world.



Touch of glass: the Louvre pyramid

(built comparatively recently) is easily accessible and very easy to get around, you can only go a short distance inside Notre Dame cathedral before there are stairs that need to be navigated. Obviously, climbing the Eiffel Tower is out – though you can get the lift some of the way up – but boats along the Seine make a pleasant afternoon's trip.

And if, after all this travelling, you become tired but are still feeling rich, taxis in Paris are obliged by law to carry disabled passengers and to help

them into the vehicle if necessary.

Forget what is commonly said of the Parisians – the people couldn't have been more polite and helpful, despite my rather dubious French. OK, perhaps the transport was difficult – I think if I go again, I'll make sure it is to a hotel based rather nearer the centre of the city. But from my perspective, wheelchair or not, Paris has all the style, all the history and all the modernity, all the shops and all the cafés, the museums and the churches to suit anyone.

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FACT FILE

Eurostar (www.eurostar.com) has a wheelchair area on its trains. One way costs about £60 for a wheelchair-user and companion from London to Paris. The price for two adults and no wheelchair-users for the same journey is £309. If you are registered blind or partially-sighted, Eurostar offers a discounted rate of £29.50 one way for a companion. Tel: 08705 186 186 or 0044 1233 617 575. Eurostar allows guide dogs on the trains, and also provides staff to give assistance to people getting on or off trains, but you must arrive about 45 minutes before departure and inform them in advance.

The RATP website (www.ratp.info/touristes) gives information on which parts of the Paris transport system are accessible for wheelchair-users. For travel on the Metro, RER, buses or trains, RATP will provide someone to accompany non-wheelchair disabled passengers between 8am and 8pm, though this needs to be booked a day in advance and costs about 25 euros an hour. It is also possible to get a braille metro map from the Association Valentin Huay (www.avh.asso.fr)

There are buzzers to assist visually-impaired tourists at most designated crossing points on the roads; though textured surfaces are not standard

For information on wheelchair-accessible hotels in Paris, visit www.accessinparis.org/accommodation.php for accommodation from five star quality to cheap and cheerful (but still accessible), and prices per night from under €80 for a double room with breakfast up to €500

Admission to national museums is free for those with documentary proof that they are disabled

Taxis are obliged by law to carry you and to help you into the vehicle if you are disabled. They are also obliged to take guide dogs.

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tried & tested

It's **not** a lawn mower...

Rowena Gausden has discovered a handy device that opens up new horizons for wheelchair-users

For some time, I have been looking for a solution for pushing a manual wheelchair over rough ground. I have cerebral palsy and have been a wheelchair-user for many years. My arms are quite strong but now I need power to get me moving. I have looked at a variety of gadgets and up until now I have not found anything that I felt happy with. I do not want a power-chair, although I expect that day will come, but what I want is a device that I can attach to my manual wheelchair that will enable me to boldly go where no other manual chairs have gone before.

I found the perfect answer to my problem at the Beyond Boundaries show in late June, when I met Andrew Little of Ahead, the UK sole dealer for Swiss-Trac.

A device that fits to a manual wheelchair and gives it power, stability



Smooth operator: Rowena on a roll with her new Swiss-Trac

and, most importantly, off-road capabilities, Swiss-Trac was developed by Swiss engineer Josef Jakober, who is a C5/C6 tetraplegic.

Swiss-Trac is a one-horsepower, 24-volt, battery-powered, four-wheel drive wheelchair tractor. A detachable bracket is fitted to an ordinary manual wheelchair. The tractor has a hinged bar that locks into the bracket.

With regard to performance, its speed is adjustable up to six km per hour. It has a range of 30km on level ground and it can go up a slope of 20 degrees.

Back home in Eastbourne, my husband and I decided to arrange a test-drive.

Andrew, who drove up

from Gloucester, unloaded Swiss-Trac from his van, and it was love at first sight.

I took Swiss-Trac for my first trial run down to our local shops. This might not sound like a good test for an off-road device but the pavements in our area are diabolical. If I could happily traverse this terrain, I could go anywhere. It took a little practice, but I can now attach and detach the Swiss-Trac fairly easily from my chair without assistance.

It also took a little while to master kerbs, slopes and listing pavements. Swiss-Trac lifts the front wheels of the wheelchair off the ground, so there are fewer bumps, and by pushing the

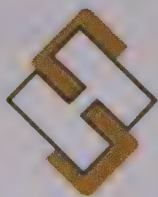
handle to use its forward set of wheels, it is possible to have a smooth ride even over bumpy surfaces.

The downside is that it is heavy (though it means it won't tip over) and can be difficult to load into a car. It comes with two ramps for loading but I am not really able to do it without assistance. A hook can be fitted so that a hoist can be used.

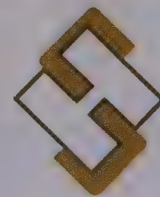
The order was placed and, within a few weeks, Andrew was back with my new toy. For my first outing, we took it to the Cuckoo Trail, which is a disused railway line that is now a cycle path. It was brilliant and coped well with the uneven ground. Since then, I have been along the Cuckmere Valley over some very rough ground and even up a steep shingle bank.

Everyone I meet is very interested in the Swiss-Trac even though they all think it is a lawn mower.

• **Swiss-Trac: £3,999 for adult size, £3,899 for child's version** (hooks and second bracket are extra). Phone orders can be made by calling Communic8 on **01452 540783** or email **ahead.al@googlemail.com**



Sussex Health Care



Rapkyns Care Centre, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Beech Lodge, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Norfolk Lodge, Horsham, West Sussex

Redwood House, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex



Sussex Health Care is an award winning group of care homes that were founded in 1985. Sussex Health Care now operate 15 care homes, predominantly in the West Sussex area, providing nearly 450 beds, incorporating specialist care provision as well as care for older people. Sussex Health Care currently have vacancies in two of our care homes:



Rapkyns Care Centre opened 2 new bungalows in January 2007. The home is based in Broadbridge Heath and caters for young people with complex and multiple needs. The home is

comprised of three bungalows for ten people and one for eleven which are purpose built and fully accessible for wheelchairs. Each single room provides en-suite facilities and track hoisting is available throughout. There is one bed available for respite care. There is a day centre on site with swimming pool and IT suite. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy are available to service users as is 24 hour nursing care.

A Speech and Language Therapist is also employed.

Rapkyns Care Centre is a purpose built bungalow which provides two wings of 10 bedrooms all with en-suite facilities providing care for young adults with multiple and complex needs. The registered care home with nursing has been equipped with all the latest technological aids and provides a safe, comfortable, homely environment for our service users. Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service user's needs and wishes at the centre of our service. Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

Sussex Health Care also currently have residential vacancies in two of our care homes:

Both **Norfolk Lodge** and **Redwood House** have been skilfully converted to accommodate 8 people in each home and offer a specialised residential environment for adults with learning disabilities who may also present with moderately challenging behaviour.

Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service users needs and wishes at the centre of our service.

Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

Beechcroft Care Centre, East Grinstead, West Sussex

Sussex Health Care are opening a new service (Beechcroft Care Centre) in East Grinstead for young people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities in January 2008.

The service will be a purpose built 10 bedded bungalow. All bedrooms will have their own en-suite facilities and track hoisting will be available throughout. Wheelchair access will be developed inside and outside the building. A hydrotherapy pool will be available within the home plus a separate snoozelin facility. All food will be cooked in the premises and service users encouraged to assist with planning their own menus.

Each service user will be assisted to develop his or her own person centred plan. Sussex Health Care work very closely with local colleges and Outreach services and service users will be given the opportunity to attend a college or Outreach service that meets their needs. Much emphasis will be placed on ensuring that service users integrate with the local community and trips to the town, cinema, pubs, and bowling are just some of the outings that will be organised.

The home will be staffed 24 hours a day and there will be waking night staff on duty. NVQ training will be available.

A nurse will be on every shift to deal with any health issues. Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists will also be available as will music, aromatherapy and reflexology. Individual sessions will form part of the individual's person centred plan.

The home will be registered with a local GP who will visit weekly and when needed.

For further information

Please contact Corrine Wallace, Head of Specialist Care Services and Future Development,

Tel: (01403) 217338 • Fax: 01403 210424 • email: corrine.wallace@sussexhealthcare.org • web: www.sussexhealthcare.org



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



roadtest



Patients get the parking blues

More and more hospitals are charging disabled people to park, says **Helen Smith**



MARTA BARTOSIEWICZ

It used to be that having a blue badge pretty much guaranteed you free parking if you had to attend a hospital appointment. But times have changed, NHS trusts are suffering huge deficits and it seems one sure way of making money is to charge everyone for parking and that includes blue badge holders too!

One hospital to introduce charging for disabled people is Coventry's University Hospital. Dr Martin Lee, interim chief executive of the trust, says: "As a doctor I could no longer agree to subsidise car parking from healthcare budgets. This is money that we cannot afford to lose from patient care." Under

the new scheme, parking costs £3 for up to two hours, rising to £10 for up to 24 hours. However, parking is still free if you receive a means-tested benefit, but the current system means people have to pay and reclaim their parking charges each time they visit the hospital.

At Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, the system is similar to Coventry whereby only blue badge holders on means-tested benefits don't have to pay for parking, but here patients have to bring all their benefit documents with them. Heartlands patient Harry Farrer claims this means he has to walk a considerable distance to present his blue badge and

documents to the ticket office before he's even got to his appointment.

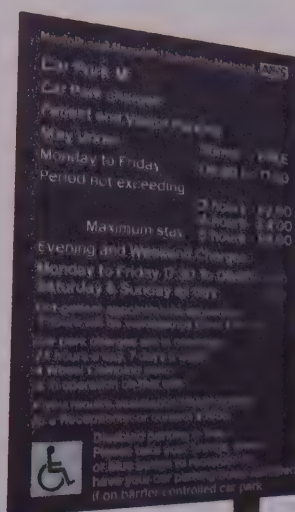
There is the argument that disabled people have the same ability to pay as everyone else, but what disabled people don't have is choice. Douglas Campbell, chair of the charity Mobilise, says: "Even if disabled people don't receive a means-tested benefit they probably have to attend a higher number of hospital appointments, and unlike non-disabled people, cannot jump on a bike or catch the bus. All that will happen is more disabled people will demand hospital transport and this will cost more than allowing all disabled people to park for free."

To add to the confusion, parking entitlements are different depending on which hospital you attend. Whereas some hospitals charge their blue badge holders to park, others still

This variation in charging is not only confusing; it is also unfair

allow disabled people to park for free. A spokesperson from the Department of Health says: "It is a matter for individual NHS trusts to decide whether or not to charge for car parking, and set the level of charges in the light of local circumstances. Often there will be special arrangements for certain types of patients or visitors giving concessions or exemption from charges."

This variation in charging across the country is not only confusing for people who have to attend different hospitals but it is also unfair. It seems the postcode lottery on healthcare provision extends to free disabled parking as well.



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If you are in receipt of certain benefits, you could be entitled to **FREE** home insulation from British Gas[†] and access to British Gas' lowest standard rates, saving you both energy and money and still keeping you warm.

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The British Gas Essentials tariff offers eligible customers access to our lowest standard rates, regardless of how they pay for their energy. A customer who pays for their energy using a prepayment meter could save £140* a year. To qualify for the Essentials tariff, you must be a British Gas customer in receipt of one of the benefits below.

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- Council tax benefit
- Housing benefit
- Income support
- Income-based job seekers allowance
- Carers allowance
- Severe disablement allowance.

*Based on average annual gas consumption of 20,500 kWh and electricity consumption of 3,300 kWh on a single rate meter on standard variable prepayment prices, compared to standard variable Monthly Direct Debit prices at 14th June 2007. Figures are rounded and include VAT at 5%. Averaged across all electricity regions - actual saving will vary by region and meter type.

Call 0845 850 2207⁴

quoting ref. DNOW

[†] These offers are also open to Scottish Gas customers.

1. Source: Energy Saving Trust, August 2007. Based on a 3 bed gas heated semi-detached house with an average annual gas consumption of 20,500 kWh. Individual savings may vary depending on type and age of home. 2. No guarantee takes away any rights you have under the law. 3. Subject to survey. Successful applicants will only be eligible for measures recommended by the appointed surveyor. 4. Lines are open Monday to Friday (Saturday mornings for home insulation). Your call may be recorded and/or monitored for quality assurance and compliance purposes. BT customers will be charged a minimum of 4p per minute for this call (or 1p per minute during evenings and weekends). A call set up fee of 3p applies to calls from residential lines. Non BT customers should check the cost of their call with their provider.

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Example: 3 bed semi-detached uninsulated house	British Gas current price ³	Cost to you	Yearly savings on your bill ¹ Gas Central Heating
Cavity wall insulation	£250	FREE	£90
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roadtest

Thatcher's child comes of age



JAMIE TROUNCE

Paul Carter and **Jamie Trounce** find the Vauxhall Astra surprisingly enjoyable to drive, despite the uninspired interior

It feels a bit strange reviewing the Vauxhall Astra.

After all, it's part of Britain's motoring heritage, and has been in existence now in various incarnations since Margaret Thatcher came to power.

The present version was launched in 2004, in a bid to

challenge Ford's domination of the middle-of-the-road market with their Focus.

From the outside, the updates to the body of the Astra have given it a more stylish and modern exterior than its predecessors, making it look quite stylish, especially towards the rear of the car.

The build quality is also good, and the whole car feels sturdy and well-made. It even managed to pass the middle-aged-man test of a new car's reliability – shutting the door provided a more than satisfying clunk.

In terms of access, the Astra scores highly. The doors open to a refreshingly wide angle, and the sills are low enough to facilitate transfer reasonably easily, although there is something of a drop to reach the seat,

which may prove tricky for some.

Once inside the car, though, things seem to go horribly wrong.

The dashboard contains more plastic than a five-year-old's toybox, and have been designed with all the flair and imagination of a concrete paving slab.

This is a real shame, because in terms of drive, the Astra really holds its own, and in some cases, betters other cars in its class.

Shooting around the lunchtime, inner-city traffic, its handling and grip were sharp and extremely responsive, even at low speeds. All in all, the ride quality was very smooth.

The diesel engine also provided a surprising amount of poke for 1.3 litres. It did sound a little strained at higher revs, but never enough to cause any noticeable hit in performance.

All in all, if you're after a dependable, accessible car from the Ronseal school of manufacturing, you won't need to look much further. That is, as long as you don't mind a cockpit that looks like a phonebox.



Drastic plastic: inside the Astra

The Astra is available in a range of engine sizes, from 1.3 to 1.8i. There are also a number of "trim" options available. Advance payments range from nil to £399. Model tested was the Astra Life 1.3 CDTi, available for an advance payment of £199 from Motability. Until 31 December, the Vauxhall Astra Life 1.8i 16v VVT is on special offer, with no advance payment.

sportnow

By Paul Carter



Wheelchair aim for 2012

A new campaign aims to provide 2,012 wheelchairs for young disabled athletes by the time the Paralympic Games come to London.

The Wheel Appeal campaign by WheelPower, the national organisation for wheelchair sport, aims to raise £6 million by 2012 – enough money to provide sports wheelchairs for 2,012 promising sportspeople.

Each £3,000 will provide a new sports wheelchair, training and support from WheelPower's staff at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the birthplace of the Paralympic movement.

Minister for sport Gerry Sutcliffe said: "Britain has a proud history in Paralympic sport with our Paralympic athletes amongst the best in the world. All athletes have to start somewhere and having the right equipment from an early age is vital if our disabled children and young people are going to get involved in sport and have the opportunity to pursue it to the next level."

The Wheel Appeal will present the first sports wheelchairs at Stoke Mandeville in July 2008, the 60th anniversary of the first wheelchair sport event.

Woods takes silver in New York

British wheelchair athlete Shelly Woods had to settle for second place in this year's New York marathon.

Woods (pictured, centre), 21, from Blackpool, finished in a time of 1:54:19, taking the silver for the second successive year.

The race was won by Switzerland's Edith Hunkeler, who set a new course record at 1:52:38.

The victory marked a fine return to form for Hunkeler, after a crash at the 2006 World Championships almost ended her racing career.

Woods told *Disability Now*: "It was a great race. Everybody was there, it was like a world championship showdown, so to finish second, I'm happy and to beat all those girls but one

was really good.

"Edith Hunkeler is pushing very well and dropped me on the final climb in the last three kilometres. It hurt."

"I'd really like to conquer New York, I think it's the toughest marathon in the world. So after my end-of-season break is over, it's back to training."

In the men's race, Australian Kurt Fearnley took the title for the second year running, crossing the line in 1:33:58.

David Weir, who beat Fearnley into second at the London marathon, was absent from the starting line-up as he continues to recover from the glandular fever which kept him out of the World Championships in Osaka.

Another notable absentee was reigning world record-holder, Ernst Van Dyk from South Africa.

Van Dyk's racing chair was lost for the second time this year on the flight from Johannesburg.

He said: "The New York marathon had been my target to 'save' my season. I had won every single race I have entered for in the last four months, setting a personal best of 1:23:22 last weekend in Japan for the marathon."

He said the earlier blunder had cost him a huge chunk of his annual income, through lost prize money, and that the New York marathon had been "a big opportunity to save a disastrous financial year".

SETH WENIG/APPHOTOS

IAAF runs tests on Pistorius' blades

Paralympic sprint sensation Oscar Pistorius was last month beginning tests that will finally determine whether he will be allowed to compete in events alongside non-disabled athletes.

As *Disability Now* went to press, South African Pistorius, 20, was set to begin two days of biometrical analysis at the German Sport University in Cologne, conducted by Professor Peter Bruggeman, an expert in athletics biomechanics, and witnessed by representatives of both the International Association

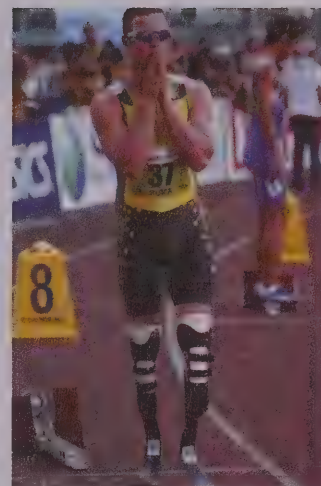
of Athletics Federations (IAAF), and Pistorius.

The IAAF, which is funding the research, wants to determine if Pistorius' prosthetic carbon-fibre "blades" can be classed as "technical aids" that give him an unfair advantage over non-disabled athletes.

IAAF communications director Nick Davies said there would be cameras and computers, as well as equipment such as force pads, built into the track to test Pistorius as he races against three non-disabled 400m runners.

He said: "This is because the point of the testing is to see how Oscar compares to able-bodied athletes and establish whether Oscar's prosthetics are 'technical aids' which give him excessive advantage over other athletes who don't use them. IAAF rules forbid the use of such technical aids in competition."

Professor Bruggemann will analyse the results and the IAAF expects to receive a report within a month. After that, the IAAF will take a decision on whether Pistorius can compete in non-disabled events, potentially opening



OLYCOM SPA/REX FEATURES

the door for others to follow.

In July, Pistorius accused the IAAF of making "unacceptable" and "derogatory" comments about his ongoing battle to compete in non-disabled races.

GB win three medals in pre-Beijing shooting championships

Britain picked up three medals at the Para-Oceania Continental Shooting Championships, the final qualifying event ahead of the Beijing Paralympics.

Di Coates (*pictured*) took silver in the R2 10m air rifle standing, shooting a score of 100.7, while Mi Sook Lee from Korea claimed the gold medal with 103.6.

In the R3 10m air rifle mixed prone, Nathan Milgate took bronze with a score of 102.4, behind Australian Ashley Adams, who shot 104.3, and

Abdulla Alaryani of the United Arab Emirates, who scored 105.4.

Milgate also took part in the R1 10m air rifle standing, finishing in seventh place.

Elsewhere, Karen Butler took bronze in the R8 50m sport rifle .22, the same result she achieved at the European Championships in July.

In all, 65 athletes from almost 20 countries competed at the event, held in Sydney from 28 October to 4 November.

Great Britain team manager Pasan Kularatne



said: "As well as giving our athletes an opportunity to score qualification marks for the Paralympic Games, these championships also gave some of the less

experienced on the squad exposure to a major championships in a different timezone, which will be good preparation for Beijing next year."

artsreview

GET IN THE FESTIVE SPIRIT...

IT'S PANTO TIME!

Oh no it isn't. Oh yes it is that time of year again when sleigh bells are ringing and all your favourite soap stars are singing or performing in a whole host of cheery, festive shows. **Lucy Howard** reports

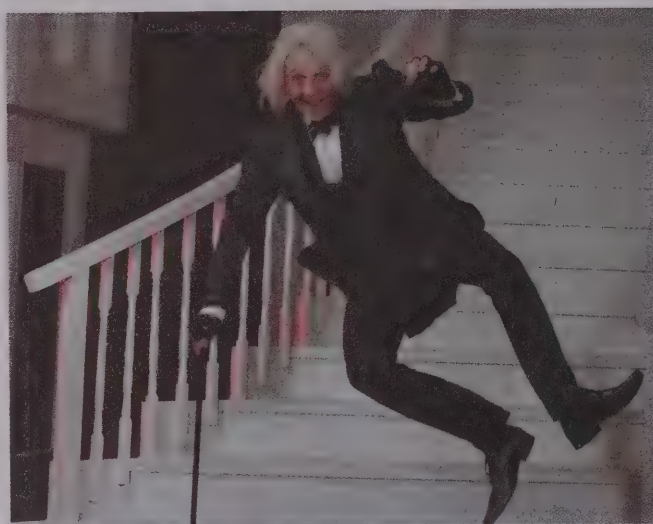
Chickenshed's Christmas show is an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which features a cast of hundreds. The production includes singing and integrated sign language. There will also be captioned and audio-described performances and touch tours.

• **28 November-12 January.**
From £9. Tel: 020 8292 9222, www.chickenshed.org.uk

Lisa Hammond (see page 25) will be starring in *Beauty and the Beast* at the Lyric Hammersmith in London. The show is a new production from theatre company Told by an Idiot, which has used Jean Cocteau's film *La Belle et La Bête* as the show's inspiration.

• **29 November-5 January.**
From £10. Tel: 08700 500 511, www.lyric.co.uk

Cinderella comes to London's Old Vic theatre this Christmas in a new adaptation from Stephen Fry. Starring Pauline Collins



JOHN PRIDMORE

Dickens of a show: *A Christmas Carol* at the Chickenshed

and Sandi Toksvig, the show puts a modern slant on the classic tale.

• **4 December-20 January.**
From £9. Tel: 0870 060 6628, www.oldvictheatre.com

Manchester's Library Theatre is staging *Tom's Midnight Garden* this Christmas. There will be two workshops for disabled people on 12 December and 10 January.

• **1 December-12 January.**
From £8.25. Tel: 0161 236 7110, www.librarytheatre.com

Half Moon's latest show *Iceide Bicycle* tells the story of Spike and Bella, who follow their grandma's footprints through the snow and enter a different world. With integrated sign language. Aimed at two to six-year-olds. The show will be at the Half Moon theatre in London.

• **21-24 November, before touring to March 2008.**
£4.50. Tel: 020 7709 8900, www.halfmoon.org.uk

Krazy Kat Theatre Company is celebrating its 25th

birthday with a tour of *Clownderella*, which features a clown who loves telling fairy stories. The show, which is directed by sign-songstress Caroline Parker, includes colourful costumes, puppetry, opera and integrated sign language.

• Tel: 01273 692552, www.krazykattheatre.co.uk

Theatre company 3D is presenting *The Wizard of Oz* at Derby Dance. The show, adapted from the film's screenplay, will be performed in sign language with an accompanying voiceover. From £4.

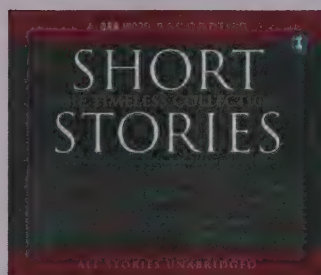
• **11-13 December.**
Tel: 01332 370911, www.derbydance.co.uk

Oily Cart's children's show *If All the World Were Paper* is touring to February 2008. The show imagines a world made entirely of paper. Aimed at two to five-year-olds. The show will be at the Warwick Arts Centre in Coventry.

• **1 December- 5 January.**
From £7.50. Tel: 020 8672 6329, www.oilycart.org.uk

AUDIOBOOKS

Will Young reading Roald Dahl must be one of this season's audiobook hits, says **Vidar Hjardeng**



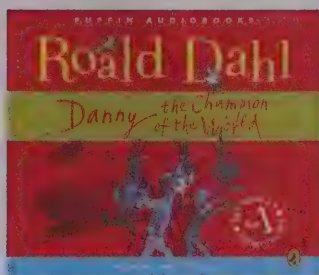
Amid the excitement of Christmas, hopefully there will still be time to listen to one of this year's many new audiobooks. Household names such as Martin Jarvis, Hugh Laurie and the late Sir Nigel Hawthorne bring to life a whole range of listening in *Short Stories – The Timeless Collection* (CSA Word, £19.99). Stories range from the humour of Jerome K Jerome to the macabre tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

For suspense with a touch of deadpan humour, Robert Harris' thriller *The Ghost* (Random House, £16.99) should fit the bill. Robert Glenister superbly portrays the cynical writer who realises he has made a terrible mistake when he "ghosts" the memoirs of Britain's former Prime Minister.

For fans of the whodunnit, the popular Venetian detective Commissario Brunetti's latest murder case

is as gripping as ever in Donna Leon's *A Sea of Troubles* (Random House, £13.99), not least thanks to Andrew Sachs' narrative expertise.

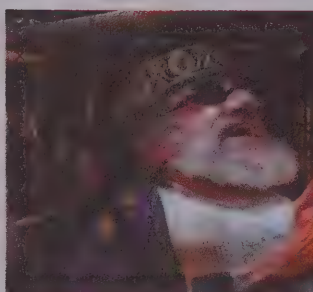
Another crime novel, this time a compelling historical one, is C J Sansom's *Dissolution* (PanMacmillan, £16.99). Enhanced by the distinctive tones of Anton Lesser, this is a tale of murder and treachery during the reign of Henry VIII.



Stephen Fry once again delivers a tour de force as the narrator of J K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Bloomsbury), but at £75 it may prove a bit pricey for the Christmas stocking.

However, the unabridged recordings of Roald Dahl could be more affordable. Penguin has released 10 of his popular stories at £12.99 each, and one of the titles, *Danny the Champion of the World*, is read by pop star Will Young – and read well, too!

THEATRE



DOUGLAS ROBERTSON

Endgame

I'd already agreed to review Theatre Workshop's new production of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* when a friend said to me: "You know that's the one with the people in bins on stage, don't you?" and I wondered just what I'd let myself in for. As the play begins, we find ourselves at a kind of apocalypse, a winding down of existence, the four-strong cast of characters waiting for the end. Hamm, the main character (Nabil Shaban, pictured), sums up the situation brilliantly: "Moments upon moments... all life long you wait for that to build up."

Hamm, resplendent in soiled silk dressing-gown, is blind and unable to walk, but is also trapped, sitting high atop a strange, birdcage structure, emphasising his dependence on his servant, Clov (Garry Robson). There is nothing left in the world; no

weather, no change, no animals, and no people – apart from Hamm, Clov and Hamm's ancient parents, Nell and Nag (the people in the ash cans).

Virtually nothing happens; the whole play is a kind of tragic, uncomfortable wait, as Hamm torments his servant with demands, and Clov relishes mocking his master.

Terrified of being the last man on earth, he continually threatens to leave and abandon Hamm to his fate, but it is a fate that he too must share.

So far so bleak, but Shaban's masterful physical comedy and a fair amount of bawdy humour undercut some of the doom and gloom, and although the play was written in 1956 its themes could just as well apply to the threat of global warming today.

• **Endgame will be at Liverpool's Unity Theatre on 27 November as part of DaDaFest, and is then touring Scotland from 2-23 February 2008. For venues and dates, tel: 01312 265425, www.theatreworkshop.com**

Ivy Broadhead

→ **Up-to-the-minute listings**

For all the very latest arts listings visit www.disabilitynow.org.uk/arts

webwatch

Shape of things to come

Paul Carter on progress with *Disability Now* online, including improved news coverage

It has now been a whole month since the new-look *Disability Now* website landed in your web-browsers, and doesn't time fly?

So far, feedback from users (that's you, by the way) has generally been very positive.

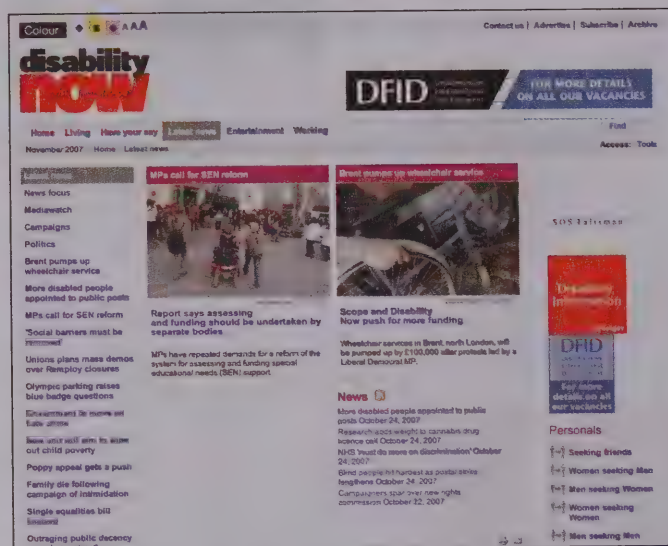
We hope that you are finding the new design much more accessible than the former site.

Hopefully, you will have already noticed the improved news coverage online, which can be accessed by clicking on "latest news" in the top menu.

All of the news stories from the current issue of the magazine, and previous issues, can be accessed via the "news focus" link in that section.

This is very much an area that we are looking to

We hope that you are finding the new design to be much more accessible than the former site



Breaking news: the main news page of our site

expand, and we hope to make the *Disability Now* website the first place to visit for the very latest news that matters to disabled people.

However, as I mentioned in last month's Web Watch, the new site is very much a "work in progress".

We're certainly aware that there are still some creases to be ironed out, and we're working hard behind the scenes, along with our technical and design team, to ensure that we get it fully up-to-speed

as soon as we can.

Your feedback in this process is invaluable and always welcomed – for example, we've already made changes to the accessibility aspects of the site based on comments we received from users, and although we can't promise to act on every single recommendation, we really do take all of them on board and make changes where appropriate.

Ultimately, the website is in a two-stage development, with some of

the more major changes to be implemented over the coming weeks, such as the addition of a system enabling you to make comments on any of the articles posted online.

There are also plans for a total overhaul of the *Disability Now* communities area, with a brand-new forum.

For now, the existing forums will continue to operate via the link on the right-hand side of the homepage.

Unfortunately, we are a small team with limited resources, so we do have to balance our time between the printed magazine and the website, and sometimes things do take a little longer than we'd like.

However, rest assured that revamping the website is something we're wholly committed to achieving, with you in mind.

As always, your patience is very much appreciated. See you online.

→ More information
Visit disabilitynow.org.uk

backlash



Geek seeks total control

Paul Carter may not be able to use an iPhone but he'd still like to own one



COURTESY OF APPLE

I've been thinking a lot about technology this past month. More so than usual, in fact.

You see, when it comes to gadgets, I'm a bit of a geek, and the reason for my overly obsessive technolust is that this month finally sees the release of Apple's much-vaunted, much-hyped, much-wanted-by-me, iPhone.

There's only one problem: I can't use it.

You see, the main feature of the iPhone that makes it more desirable than backstage passes to a supermodel swimwear convention – and there are many – is the very same one that makes it totally inaccessible to me.

It has no buttons.

That's right, no buttons. The geniuses in Apple's design department have come up with a handset totally operated by touch screen, meaning my cack-handed mashing of the screen is more likely to see me accidentally dial a direct line to the Burundi ambassador to Western Peru than it is to write a simple text message comprehensible only to

people under 16.

The thing is, I don't care. I want one anyway.

Let me tell you something. I bought a guitar once. A proper, Fender Stratocaster electric one. It had a strap and everything. It even had one of those bars that you pull to make it go waaah.

Now, there's a problem here. The main drawback to me owning a guitar is the fact that I HAVE NO HANDS. What the hell was the point?

Unless a new musical genre emerges consisting of an open D chord being strummed (badly) over and

over again, there wasn't one. Still, James Blunt hasn't done too badly, and besides, it looks damn good

Own up: who reading this wouldn't be interested in a Microsoft power-chair?

in my lounge, and that's all that matters.

I'd also like to think that it impresses ladies, but guitars are ranked down there alongside other things that blokes (wrongly) think

impress girls, like spaghetti bolognese and loud farting.

Anyway, my point is that we as disabled people are constantly being told that gadgets and technology are good for us, and can revolutionise our lives. In some cases, they're right, of course. For example, I don't know where I'd be without online shopping. Actually, I do: I'd be forced into making the long and arduous three-minute walk across the road to buy bread and ready-meals.

The thing is, it seems increasingly that we have to make a choice between having something stylish or having something accessible. There's no middle ground. Whatever happened to form *and* function?

Maybe the tech companies should move into the market for disability equipment.

Own up: who reading this wouldn't be interested in a Google communication aid or a Microsoft power-chair? I sure as dammit would.

But, to be honest, if Apple brought out its own range of manure (iShite anyone?) I'd probably consider buying a couple of loads. But only if it had wi-fi, obviously. I'm not completely stupid.

Sound advice on working in the media

Libby Cross (*below*), an independent radio producer who built up a successful career at the BBC, says ideas are her most valuable commodity



I was a university student in 1988 when I was interviewed for Channel 4 about access to higher education. I thought my 15 minutes of fame had come and gone, but then I received a letter from the production company inviting me to audition for a job as a presenter. I did the audition and, a few weeks later, I was filming in Tenerife for an item about accessible holidays.

Nearly 20 years on, I'm now self-employed with my own production company – I make documentaries for BBC Radio 4, and I'm producing a DVD for the Spinal Injuries Association.

I need a steady supply of new ideas to do my job

effectively. Ideas are my most valuable currency; without them, I wouldn't be able to persuade people to give me money! It's not a glamorous job, but I do enjoy meeting people, shaping their stories with interviews and music, and making something meaningful out of their experiences.

While my career began in disability programming, most of it has been spent making "mainstream" programmes. Which isn't to say that being disabled doesn't come in handy at times. I'm upfront about it; in my experience, being disabled has opened more doors than it has closed.

People who may otherwise

have been dismissive are often disarmed by it, curious about it; disabled producers are few and far between, so there's the "novelty factor". Don't knock it; if it gets you that interview you desperately need, does it matter?

I worked for a while as a freelance careers adviser for Skillset, the media industries' skills council, and my advice to all clients, disabled or not, was to approach potential employers with persistence, enthusiasm, willingness to do mundane jobs in order to get your foot in the door, politeness and punctuality, and above all, with good ideas that will complement the programmes they already produce. To that, I would add: be upfront

about your disability and reassure employers that you know best about what you need.

Libby's job tips

Communication skills, a genuine curiosity about people and the world around you, the ability to listen to people as they tell their story, willingness to learn new skills – those are the qualities you need to make a successful career in the media.

Luck? Well, yes, it helps of course. But, most of all, you need to believe in yourself and what you can offer to potential employers. It would be great if we as disabled people received more encouragement about taking that on board.

LIBBY CROSS: CAREER PATH

- Graduated from Stirling with degree in history and social anthropology
- Offered job as presenter of *Same Difference* on Channel 4, researching, script-writing, recording and editing interviews
- Worked at the BBC's Disability Programmes Unit as an assistant producer – and then producer – on the current affairs series *From the Edge*
- Produced documentaries for BBC1 for the BBC's Religious Programmes Department in Manchester
- Became a producer for BBC Radio 4, producing an oral history series, *On This Day*
- Went freelance, teaching media production to 16-19 year-olds at college, and producing social history documentaries for Radio 4
- Set up her own production company to make radio programmes, worked as careers adviser for Skillset, and production skills coach for BBC North
- Still producing for Radio 4, working on two DVDs, with other projects in the pipeline

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As of October 2007, around 25 placements are available right across the UK including London, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Glasgow and Norwich, in both programming areas and programme support areas.

As well as matching the criteria for the individual placement, you'll need to demonstrate a keen interest in broadcasting and knowledge of BBC output for our diverse audience. Excellent communication and team working skills are also essential.

Applications to be received 30 November.

For further information about the BBC Extend Scheme and how to apply, please visit www.bbc.co.uk/jobs/extend2. If you do not have Internet access please call 0870 333 1330. Textphone 02890 328 478. Ceefax page 696.

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We are Britain's leading magazine for and about disabled people. We've recently relaunched with a new look and a new format. We're looking for someone to provide support to our busy editorial team. You'll also have some editorial responsibility yourself, commissioning, writing and co-ordinating the magazine's arts coverage. If you have a lively approach, excellent communication skills, very good basic IT skills, and if you're efficient, organised and enjoy being part of a team, we can offer you a fulfilling and rewarding job to kick-start your career in journalism. We particularly welcome applications from disabled people who are keen to enter the profession.

For an application pack, contact us

Email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Phone: 020 7619 7323

Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW

Closing date: 30 November 2007



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Mae ein Grŵp Ymwybyddiaeth a Chymorth Anabledd, sef fforwm rhwydweithio, yn cwrdd bob mis i drafod newyddion a chynnydd ar faterion anabledd. Mae'r siaradwyr yn dod o amryw isadrannau i drafod materion cyfredol perthnasol ynghylch anabledd.

Mae Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru yn sefydliad Buddsoddwyr mewn Pobl ac yn gyflogwr Cyfle Cyfartal.

Caiff swyddi gwag eu postio ar ein gwefan www.cymru.gov.uk/recruitment pan fyddant yn codi.

Different people. Same values.

The Welsh Assembly Government is determined to ensure we promote and maintain an environment that appreciates diversity and is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

We have the 'DAAS' (Disability Awareness And Support Group) networking forum who meet monthly to discuss disability news and progress. Speakers are brought in from various divisions to discuss relevant current issues regarding disability.

The Welsh Assembly Government is an Investor in People organisation and an Equal Opportunities Employer.

When vacancies arise they will be posted on our website www.wales.gov.uk/recruitment



disabled students' campaign

Disabled Students' Allowance: Quality Assurance Group Chair of the Board of Directors

DSA-QAG is a non-profit making organisation that is focussed on ensuring that students receive a quality service when applying for Disabled Students' Allowance at university. We audit suppliers and assessment centres to assess their quality.

We're currently going through an exciting period of change and are looking to recruit an independent director who will be able to steer our organisation to provide an effective level of quality assurance for students across the UK.

We won't be paying a salary, but all expenses are fully covered, including any access costs that you might have. And you'll be at the forefront of an organisation that cares about the rights of disabled people in education. The time commitment varies, but is something around two hours a week.

To apply, please send a personal statement to alex.kemp@nus.org.uk of less than 500 words, detailing your experience and providing some contact details.

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02 Doblo Aspen 1.9 Diesel (J2766), 24,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£8,850**

03 Doblo Aspen 1.9 Diesel (J7448), 16,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£8,995**



54 Scudo Montana 2.0 Turbo Diesel (J7267), 20,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£12,250**

02 Mercedes Sprinter 208 CDI SWB 2.2 Turbo Diesel (J7314), Drive from wheelchair, **£12,250**

53 Mercedes V-Class SWB 220 CDI (J7420), 27,000 miles, Auto, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£14,995**

01 Renault Kangoo 1.4 ltr Petrol (J7518), 48,000 miles, Low floor, lightweight ramp, **£5,250**

02 Renault Kangoo, Brotherwood 1.4ltr Petrol (J7438), 30,000 miles, Low floor, Automatic, **£8,595**



04 Renault Kangoo 1.5 DCI Diesel (J7441), 45,000 miles, Low floor, Lightweight ramp, **£8,795**

03 Renault Master SWB 2.5 DCI (J7203), 48,000 miles, 2 wheelchair spaces, lightweight ramp, **£9,995**

02 Renault, Traffic SWB 1.9DCI Turbo Diesel (J7431), 36,000 miles, ricon electric lift, 4 seats, **£9,850**

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RECRUITMENT

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The University of Kent actively promotes disability equality through all its practices and is proud to support an inclusive environment for all staff to work in. As a member of the double tick pledge the University will interview all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria.

Further information is available from our website
<http://www.kent.ac.uk/jobs/> Minicom users please telephone
 01227 824145.

We actively promote equal opportunity in education and employment and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.

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WARNING

We have been warned about a scam involving people from overseas who say they want to buy a product and who offer to pay using cheques, Western Union money transfers and certified cheques. Although no *Disability Now* readers to our knowledge have been hit by this, please be particularly wary of accepting cheques from overseas. For more information, visit the Metropolitan Police website.

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You won't find a better place to develop your career than Southern. We're a rail company that's really pulling away from our competitors, building on success to deliver an even better service for our customers. As a progressive organisation, we're fully committed to improving accessibility for our passengers and staff with disabilities. Join us and you'll play a leading role in this area.

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DEADLINE - Disability Now

January published 15 December. Classified deadlines: Booking: 26 November. Copy: 28 November.

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at **www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

RECRUITMENT

Mental Health Act Commission



Commissioners

The Mental Health Act Commission has a number of Area and Local Commissioner vacancies in England and Wales for immediate appointment. Applications are also invited for possible appointment should further vacancies arise. Commissioners have a vital role to play in monitoring the operation of the Mental Health Act as it relates to detained patients.

Further details of the time commitment, roles and responsibilities, remuneration, and the work of the Mental Health Act Commission can be found on the MHAC website www.mhac.org.uk. For an information pack and application form, which are available in braille, large print or on tape, please call 0870 240 3802 during office hours or visit www.appointments.org.uk/vacancies quoting reference DH7077.

Closing date: 7th December 2007.

Second Opinion Appointed Doctors (SOADs)

The MHAC is looking for committed, motivated and influential Consultant Psychiatrists to join our panel of SOADs. Further details can be found on the MHAC website. Expressions of interest are invited and should be sent to sue.turner@mhac.org.uk



**Appointments
Commission**

The Appointments Commission is committed to equality of opportunity for all and the principle of appointment based on merit following an open and transparent process and independent assessment. Please note this is a public appointment and not employment. See www.appointments.org.uk or www.sector1.net for further information.



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disability NOW

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CARS/VANS/ CARAVANS

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GREEN RENAULT KANGOO

Authentique 1149cc, First registered 14th June 2006, 7,000 miles, Gleneagles conversion, electrically operated hoist, secure positioning. Seats three plus wheelchair. Condition as new. Taxed until 31st August 2008. Just fully serviced. Balance of manufacturers guarantee. £10,000. Tel Mr Ramsay **01656 782950** (mid Glamorgan).

CITROEN BERLINGO

MULTISPACE 1.9 diesel, 5 door, wheelchair accessible vehicle. Brotherwoods, lowered floor conversion, rear access with lightweight manual ramp. Full wheelchair restraint system. Plus full seat belt system for wheelchair passenger, 57" internal headroom. Rear companion seat sliding side doors allow good access to rear passenger. Blue, 5 gears. Registered October, 2001. 66,000 miles. Full years MOT, 6months tax. £4,500 ono. Aberdeenshire **01330 850401**.

FIAT DOBLO ACTIVE JTD, blue, December 05, 23,000 miles, lowered floor and winch, seats 4 people plus wheelchair, Northern Ireland. Tel: **028 92 639 179**.

VOLVO ESTATE WITH

hand controls 940, 2.3, SE, automatic, petrol, 1997, white, ABS, air conditioning, 102,000 miles, full service record, one owner, 5 months MOT and Tax. Cowal hand controls: steering wheel spinner, accelerate/brake bracket on steering column. Amersham, Bucks, £2,200. Telephone **07740 183013**.

CITROEN DISPATCH 1.9D.

Y reg. 79k miles. Gowrings wheelchair conversion. Rear ramp. Inertia belts. Winch. Carries 5 including wheelchair. MOT June 2008. Excellent condition. Home demonstration can be arranged. £4,600 ono. Tel: **0191 2657916** (evening) or email john.raine@newcastle.gov.uk

RENAULT KANGOO 1.4.

Green. Wheelchair user plus 3 passengers and driver. Diesel. VGC. Reg 09/05. Taxed to 04/08 In Warranty. Inertia belts and air bags. Light manual ramp and manual windows. Cassette player and radio. 24500 miles. £7,500 ono. Please Call **0131 661 9395** (Edinburgh).

MERCEDES VITO

MERCEDES Vito 110 CDI (Diesel) Automatic 2001, FSH, 61,000 miles, soundproofed velour interior, leather seats, AC, residual heating, 4 seats, 5th removable seat, electric mirrors, airbags, remote central locking, 6 CD changer, 61000 miles one owner from new, VGC, MOT to Oct 08, £7,500, Tel **07976 343931**.

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diesel. Gleneagles Conversion. Seats 4 plus wheelchair passenger with full restraints, adjustable seatbelt and rear access ramp all in excellent working order. Red. 53,000 miles. 1998. MOT until March 2008. £2,200. Jean tel **01875 812112**.

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.6 5

door Manual Full Brotherwood conversion with counterbalanced ramp and lowered floor. Jan 2003, 52 registration. Metallic green. Comfort, styling and safety packs, twin airbags, electric front windows, central locking, ABS brakes, Air Conditioning. Takes 4 passengers plus wheelchair. Full service history, 33,000miles. Taxed and MOT. Good condition. Cost new £17.5k. Available Jan 2008. offers over £7500. Pls call **07776198623**.

MERCEDES VITO, 2.2 TDI

Automatic, Red, Six way electric power based seat, Ricon conversation, Nine way Lodgesons steering controls, remote tail gate, clear way lift, wheel chair lock down, could be supplied with wheel chair. £6,000 ono Tel: **01452 611608** or **01452 863767** (Gloucester).

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14 Speed cyclone MTM Wheelchair, 18" seat width, Spinergy wheels, virtually new, selling due to ill health, Cost £3300, Sell £2,000 ono, buyer to collect, Tel: Brian **07783791871** (East Yorkshire).

SKWIRREL MOTORISED

CHAIR Bright yellow Skwirrel (motorised chair), approx 7 years old but hardly used. Recent service and 2 new batteries. The controls are on the left at the moment but I think they can be moved. £3,800 ono. Phone Sharon **01256 767717/07764 934381** Buyer to collect (Hampshire).

HOUSEHOLD & FAMILY

KUSCHAL COMPACT

FOLDING chair, 16X18 seat, adjustable handles, Flip-away leg rests with TGA power pack. £900, without power pack £750, Tel: **0208 3300362**.

PERSONALS

I AM A 53 year old disabled widow. I am looking for someone at a similar age for friendship and maybe it will turn into more. My interests are jigsaw puzzles, competition puzzles, fishing, pubs and ready to try anything else. I am a happy go lucky person. Box **DN003**

I LIVE IN West Yorkshire, I'm male, 24 years old, interested in a wide range of music, from Blues to Metal. My C.P. affects my walking, but apart from that I'm fine. My wheelchair isn't the coolest accessory, so if you're a girl, perhaps in a similar position (or not) and live around Leeds or Wakefield (ish) please get in touch, and maybe we could meet up for a chat. Box **DN004**

competition

Your chance to WIN one of 5 EasyUse mobile phones



In our last issue we reviewed the EasyUse mobile phone from Communic8. Now's your chance to win one of these fantastically accessible phones, which retail at £139.99.

Among the features the EasyUse offers are:

- HUGE buttons on the numeric keypad
- High contrast and easy-to-read numbers
- Four speed-dial keys for those important numbers
- Very large call and end buttons
- Clear digits on a large LCD screen

If all you want or need to do is make and receive calls on an easy-to-use handset, then this is the one for you. It's also perfect for anyone who doesn't want complex menus or lots of different functions. It could be just the gift for a relative.

To win one of five supplied to us by Communic8, simply answer this easy question:

What is David Blunkett's home town?

- A) Exeter
- B) Newcastle
- C) Sheffield

Send your answer to: Communic8 competition, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Entries to reach us no later than 30 November

GOOD LUCK

Results of the Pure DAB radio competition:

Kim Tserkezie plays Penny Pocket. Congratulations to: E G Mittoo, Kent; Miss L Taylor, Leicester; Christopher Read, Surrey; Judith A Downing, Wakefield; and Ms Kim Somers, Bolton.



Information
for disabled
people

Directgov

Advice that's
easy to find

Directgov



www.direct.gov.uk/disability

Directgov is the website to visit for the latest information and services from government. It's clearly written, useful and the information is all in one place.

There's a large section for disabled people covering:

- ➔ home and housing
- ➔ financial support
- ➔ disability rights
- ➔ employment
- ➔ health and support

Find out about equipment, adapting your home or vehicle, direct payments (arranging your own care and services), social care assessments, the Blue Badge parking scheme – including an interactive UK-wide map, travel and transport, accessible technology – and much more.

There's also information for carers and links to charities and helpful organisations supporting disabled people.

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